HOW TO DRAW COMIC BOOK
HEROES AND VILLAINS

Part 3 "Fantastic Foes!"

From the author of the best-selling
HOW TO DRAW CARTOONS FOR COMIC STRIPS
CHRISTOPHER HART

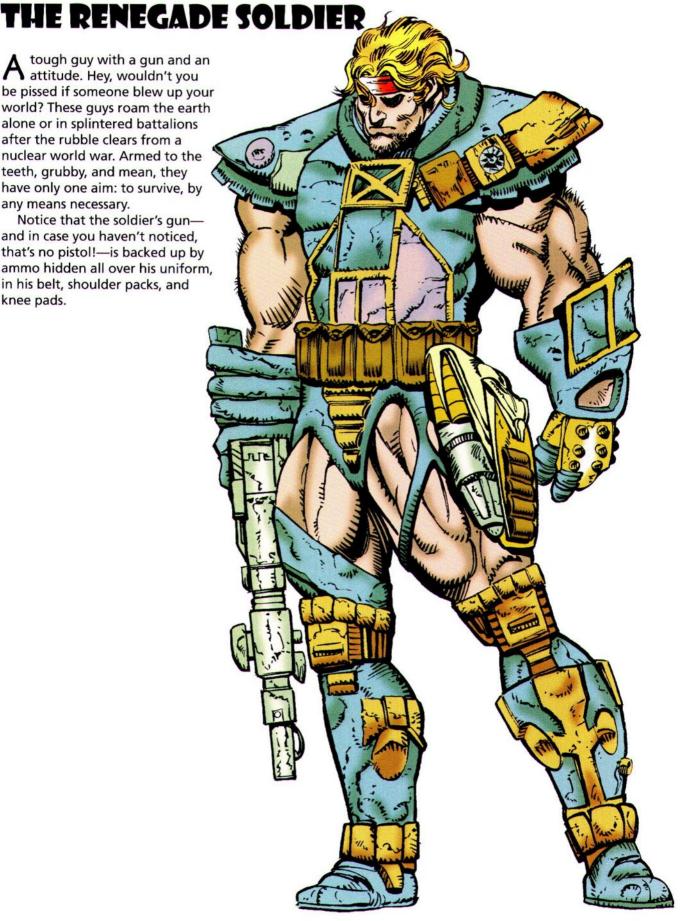# FANTASTIC FOES

VILLAINS TODAY ARE NOT JUST BAD GUYS. They're vile, repulsive, wicked, sadistic, insane, evil, bad guys. They're worse than the guy who's dating your sister. Here's an important secret about comic book villains: The more powerful and formidable the villain, the greater the hero. Villains have a wonderful time being wicked. So have fun creating an impressive villain. After all, it's an evil job, but someone's got to do it!

THE RENEGADE SOLDIER

A tough guy with a gun and an attitude. Hey, wouldn't you be pissed if someone blew up your world? These guys roam the earth alone or in splintered battalions after the rubble clears from a nuclear world war. Armed to the teeth, grubby, and mean, they have only one aim: to survive, by any means necessary.

Notice that the soldier's gun—and in case you haven't noticed, that's no pistol!—is backed up by ammo hidden all over his uniform, in his belt, shoulder packs, and knee pads.

SWORD-AND-SORCERY VILLAINS

Sword and sorcery is a popular comic book genre. The most notable series of this type is *Conan the Barbarian*. Villains of the sword-and-scorcery ilk are hulking, prehistoric hunters and fierce, tribal warriors. Clothe them in animal skins and ritualistic ornaments.

FORCES OF EVIL

If you ask any Hollywood star what role he or she enjoyed playing the most, the answer will inevitably be, "The bad guy." Bad guys are just more fun because they're so wicked and single-minded. They don't have to worry about being nice. Or playing fair. However, they can be quite charming, elegant, polite—even fastidious. And deadly.

Why are we so fascinated with bad guys? Maybe because bad guys come from primitive, subconscious images of evil. The things that go bump in the night—rats, bats, snakes, lizards, wolves, and spiders. If it can make your skin crawl, it can make a great bad guy.

Don't be literal in transforming creepy crawlies into villains. The days of giant ants that devour a city are over. Use nightmarish images to suggest a villainous personality. A spidery black cape on a vampire-like woman is much better than giving her eight spider arms. Don't repulse your audience; lure them in.

CHARACTERS—THE BAD GUYS/GALS CAN BE HUMOROUS, HANDSOME OR HORRID. REFER TO YOUR FAVORITE FILMS AS A GUIDE. A TINGE OF SENSITIVITY OR COMPASSION MAKES THEM MORE BELIEVABLE. (THEY USUALLY DEPLORE VIOLENCE AND ONLY WANT TO BE ADMIRED, IF NOT LOVED.) WHEREVER POSSIBLE USE DRAMATIC LIGHTING. COSTUMING USED TO PARTIALLY CONCEAL OR EVEN EMPHASIZE SOME INFIRMITY. LASER OPTICS, LETHAL PROSTHETICS, OR ARMED CANES OR CRUTCHES.

SIDELONG GLANCES, SNEERS, THIN LIPS DENOTING CRUELTY, CLAWED HANDS, CURLED LIPS, HIGH FOREHEADS, STRANGE ATTIRE AND ALMOST ANYTHING SUGGESTING CONTEMPT FOR ACCEPTED CONVENTIONS. THESE CREEPS REFUSE TO CONFORM UNLESS IT SUITS THEIR NEFARIOUS PURPOSES.

INVENTING A VILLAIN

Chances are, your villain started out as an average guy, just like you or me, but somewhere along the line he got dipped into a vat of toxic waste, was exposed to a strange radioactive brew, or became the victim of an industrial accident. He became embittered. Vengeful. Delusional. Insane. As a result, his appearance changed. He may have had to replace parts of his face, or they may have even mutated. So you can start by drawing an ordinary face, and by playing around with it, changing it little by little, you can transform it into the face of a consummate villain.

Sometimes it's enough that the evil inside a person shows itself on his or her face. Villains don't always have to be fiery. Sometimes the dispassion they exhibit is evil, too. This is the case with a bad-guy scientist who cruelly and relentlessly stalks new subjects for his experiments.

TAKE AN ORDINARY PERSON AND SEE WHAT YOU CAN CONTRIVE WHEN YOU LET YOUR IMAGINATION ENDOW HIM WITH WHATEVER CHARACTERISTICS YOU WISH.

WHEN DOING THE CREATING OF COMICS... "CREATIVE" IS THE OPERATIVE WORD, AS IN FILM YOU, THE ARTIST, ARE THE WHOLE SHOW, DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER, SET DESIGNER, MAKE-UP ARTIST, SPECIAL EFFECTS TECHNICIAN... THE WHOLE SHEBANG.

BEASTLY VILLAINS

Half man and half beast. These villains are totally unpredictable, just like wild animals. You can combine the human form with any animal's to create a convincing foe. This type of villain gives the impression of being physically stronger than its purely human counterpart. It is especially effective if the animal you choose is a predator.

MENACING MENAGERIE
Can you spot a leopard, a wolf, hawks, an ape, and a lion on this page?

HOLLYWOOD HEAVIES

When inspiration vanishes, as it sometimes does, there are ways of getting around it. Pick a silver-screen bad guy—either famous or not-so-famous—and draw a loose likeness. Then start altering his features. You can change them any way you like—make him taller or shorter, fatter or thinner, older or younger—but be sure to maintain that twinkle of villainy in his eye. You won't have to change very much before you've added a new character to your cast.

DEAD-ON COPY

SLIGHTLY REVISED

MEMORY SWIPE ALTERED TO REPRESENT YOUR SCRIPT'S VILLAIN.

ACTOR

REMODELED TO SUIT

REFERENCE USED ONLY AS A "TYPE."
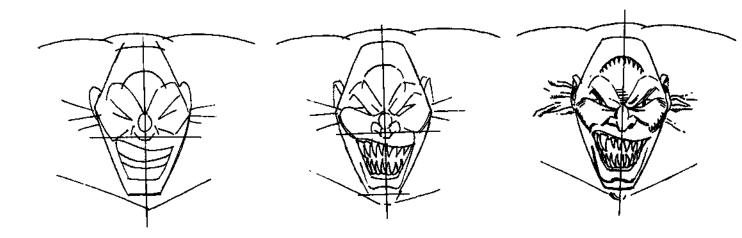
DRESSED TO KILL

The bad guys *enjoy* their costumes. They love their jobs and they like their uniforms. They are egomaniacs with inferiority complexes. Good guys wear their costumes out of a sense of duty, even though they're frequently no more practical than the bad guys'. When designing a costume for a bad guy, make sure it reflects his or her personality. Is it ostentatious? Dark or sexy? You decide.
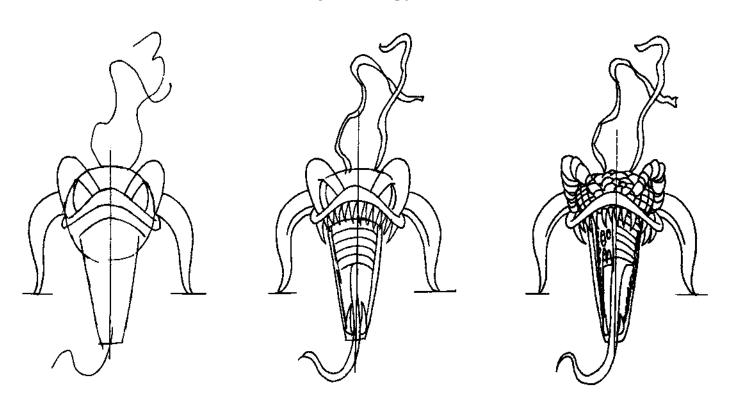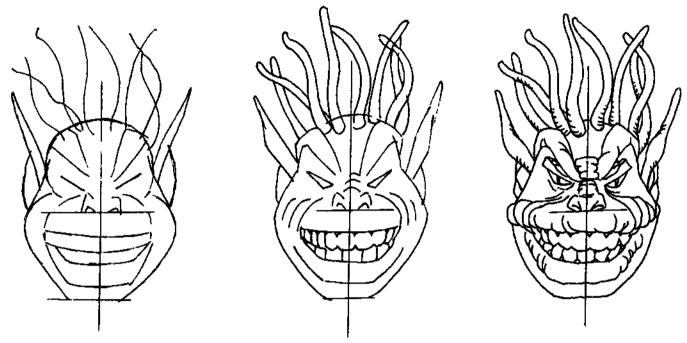

THE MOVIE SERIALS AND COMICS OF THE '30'S AND '40'S WERE FOND OF DRAPING VILLAINS AND VILLAINESSES IN CLOAKS AND HOODS. MORE RECENTLY, THE EMPHASIS SEEMS TO BE ON VARIOUS KINDS OF ARMOR AND/OR CIRCUS-TYPE COSTUMING.

UNEARTHLY CREATURES

E vil creatures are a recurring—and frequent—comic book device. You can find inspiration in the monstrous images of myths and fables, like the Medusa or Cyclops, or you can use your own imagination and any assortment of shapes in your drawings.
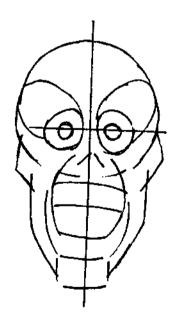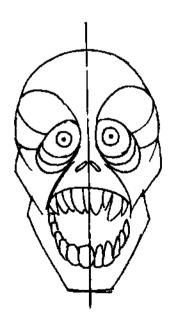
A word of caution: If you create an ornate, incredibly complex creature with lots of bumps and teeth, just remember that you're going to have to draw it over and over again in every panel. Design something you can live with.
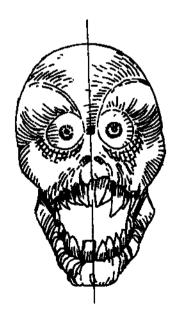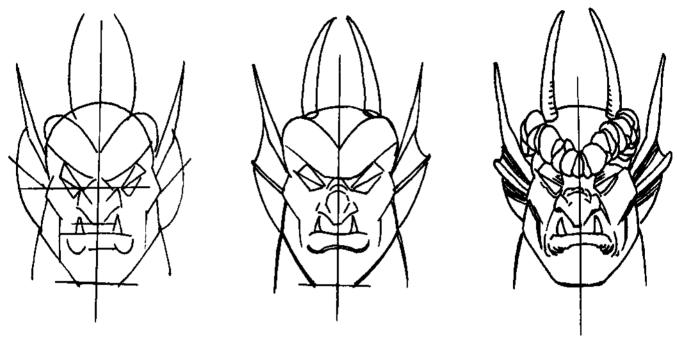
Not even a mother could love these faces. Worms sprouting out of heads isn't something you see every day. Shrunken heads may also be a little excessive. But your job as a comic book artist is to elicit a response from the seasoned comic book reader, who has seen just about everything. So take it to the limit—be extreme.

Horns, pointed ears, sharp teeth, scales, warts, and fur are all popular. As long as it doesn't make the drawing look cluttered, you can pile on as many of these kinds of features as you want. Design your creature's face to appear frightening at all times, regardless of expression.