

Places & Faces

Mark Landry spent many afternoons in Paper Heroes when he was a kid, and he recently returned as an adult—not to peruse comic books, but to sign them.

Landry, a native of Lake Charles and graduate of Louisiana State University, attended the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts and works as a screenwriter and producer in Los Angeles. He's worked for Lucasfilm and Nickelodeon. He wrote "Teen Beach Movie," which appeared on the Disney Channel, and is credited on "Teen Beach 2." But he's forever nurtured a love of comics.

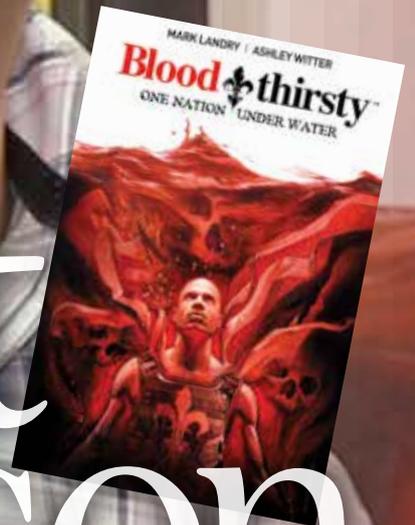
In fall 2015, he released Issue #2 of Bloodthirsty, published by Titan Comics. Bloodthirsty follows Virgil LaFleur, a former Coast Guard rescue diver who seeks revenge against wealthy vampire villains who have taken over New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The series opens with LaFleur diving into the floodwaters of the hurricane.

LaFleur soon discovers that New Orleans has a dark underbelly—darker than anyone realized. The "hemovores" take advantage of post-Katrina devastation by buying most of the ravaged land and then living off the lives of the less fortunate. Bloodthirsty has received glowing reviews in the comic-book world. Issue #1 sold out.

We recently spoke to Landry about his writing experience and his venture into his beloved world of comics.

first person

with Mark Landry by Erin Kelly





RYAN BROOKHART, WRITER/DIRECTOR OF UPCOMING HORROR FILM "TRACE," GETS HIS COPY SIGNED BY MARK LANDRY.



WRITER/CREATOR MARK LANDRY WITH THE FLASH'S NICHOLAS GONZALEZ AND KEVIN SCARLETT AS VIRGIL LAFLEUR.



WRITER/CREATOR MARK LANDRY SIGNS A FAN'S COPY OF "BLOODTHIRSTY: ONE NATION UNDER WATER" ISSUE 1.

**When did you start writing?
What inspired you?**

I started really young, as I think most writers do. The first story I remember writing was "Super Bug vs. Evil Ant" in the fifth grade. It was an epic battle of good versus evil; if I recall correctly, Evil Ant had kidnapped Super Bug's girlfriend (how patriarchal of me at the time). I did the illustrations, too. My mother probably still has it someplace. Films, comics and TV shows of the '80s were my chief inspiration until I started paying attention to the "real" world around me. Now I'm inspired by the ways in which people behave in life and in society, for which I think those fictional tales of the '80s must have been like a set of thematic training wheels.

What is unique and compelling about comics and graphic novels, in your opinion?

Sequential art on the page – in the form of comics and graphic novels – is unique in that it can often read like a novel, but at the same time present a beautifully composed and compelling page of art – page after page of it, really. I find this both immersive (like novels) and voyeuristic (like cinema) at the same time. I love great stories, and I love great visual art. When the two are combined – magic.

What inspired you specifically about Katrina?

There is an old axiom that every writer understands: Write what you know. The concept of writing what you know may seem like a no-brainer, but I've found that the

more I actually write, the more I end up writing not only what I know but also what I feel. To write about something completely foreign to me – without getting myself embedded into the subject for long enough to feel it out – would be a fool's errand.

I knew that with my first graphic novel, the learning curve of the comics production process and dealing with personalities as a producer would be challenging enough. Writing about life in the Syrian civil war would have been not only disingenuous of me, but also quite literally impossible; I would have had to take a four-year detour just to research the backstory. So I wrote about Louisiana – a place with which I have a great deal of familiarity and shared history. Louisiana and I are connected via some metaphysical umbilical cord. I feel what she feels; I eat what she eats, etc.

For me, Katrina was a brutal attack on Louisiana by Mother Nature, and I felt in hell some strange way also brutalized. I was hurt. And when the destruction exposed even deeper, more historically engrained (if superficially hidden) wounds, the act of organizing my reaction and writing it out became not only therapeutic – it was a compulsion that couldn't be resisted... like a calling.

Describe the process of creating a comic.

In a nutshell, the basic jobs along the comics assembly line are: writer, penciler, inker, colorist, then letterer; and an editor oversees

the entire process. Outside of just that physical production chain, there are marketing professionals, publishers, distributors, and retailers (the guys and gals who sell us our weekly comics at the local comics shops).

Each and every job or responsibility along that long line of production takes an insane amount of work for not very much money. Every person listed above makes comics because he or she loves making comics. For example, on "Bloodthirsty," I wrote the story in my free time (nobody hired me). The two editors I brought on – John Hazners and Chris Fortier – advised me for no pay, as did our professional mentor and resident Jedi, Georges Jeanty (artist for Joss Whedon's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and "Serenity"). Then I raised the money via Kickstarter (and my savings account) to hire the artists – who couldn't possibly complete all of their tasks without being paid something. I did the first round of lettering myself – also in my free time.

Once we had enough of the art and lettering completed, I shopped the sample pages around to various publishers, and Titan Comics (who publish "Doctor Who," "Heroes," "Man Plus," among many other titles) offered to publish it. This was a major milestone in the process because – as a creator-owned project – publication is never a guarantee. This meant that the book would eventually make it to shelves all over the world.

Publishers – when and if they pick up a creator-owned title –

need to keep their financial risk low, so they can't really afford to offer a big sum of money to publish a project like *Bloodthirsty*. They're mostly covering the very considerable costs of printing, marketing and distribution, and then we split some portion of the revenues on the back end (if enough books are sold).

This entire process – from initial idea to books on shelves – will have taken almost five years once the graphic novel (combined issues into a single volume) of *Bloodthirsty* is printed in the spring.

... and the experience of writing a film, and seeing it come to fruition.

This is a real trip, because as a screenwriter, I'm not typically involved in any of the downstream production processes of a film project. I don't like logistics, so I stay away from producing responsibilities; other people direct it, edit it, mix the sound, etc. By the time I saw *Teen Beach Movie* at the screening on the Disney lot, it had been about three years since I had even been involved. And voila – there's a finished movie! And there are all the characters and the story points we created, and the dialogue is being spoken out loud by talented actors. That was really, really fun. I could get used to it.

To read more about Bloodthirsty, visit bloodthirstycomic.com.