WonderCon special guest Ryan Sook is known for his dynamic cover designs, so he was a natural to design this year’s Program Book cover and official T-shirt. Utilizing DC’s New 52 costume designs for its “Big Three” heroes, Ryan came up with a stunning illustration that captures the power of all three heroes and their respective worlds. We asked Ryan for his take on how the cover came to be.

**What’s your initial thought process on designing a piece like this, especially since you’re dealing with three such iconic characters?**

Initially, my thought was to try and capture what has been great about the mighty three for the last seven decades, while trying to breathe some new life into the imagery and express some of the “spirit” of the present-day renditions of these characters. I tried to use poses and expressions that would convey those attributes while still working nicely within the necessary guidelines of the use of the art.

**Since you do your own digital coloring, do you always think of covers in terms of color right off the bat?**

Yes, whenever I’m working on a piece that is intended to be in color, I envision it that way, whether I am coloring it or not. This was no exception. The fact that we were using three characters designed with basically three primary colors, I could color the background elements with secondary colors and allow the main imagery to really pop!

**In the case of this cover, what led you to include the various “environments” for each hero?**

Superman is not Superman without Krypton as much as Diana is not a princess unless she is a princess of somewhere. And really, who is Batman without Gotham City?

I wanted to include the elements because to me they speak as much to the iconic nature of the characters as their costumes. Also, including these elements allowed for a color scheme that I hoped would work overall much better than a single color or singular environment.

**Can you walk us through your process a bit, from sketch to pencils to inks to final composition and color?**

After considering what was needed, the sketch came pretty naturally, and the color scheme was formulated at that time. For the multiple uses of the art, each figure needed to be usable as a separate and distinct entity. So I penciled each figure on a separate piece of paper, keeping a close eye on the sketch for size and placement. I used a light table to overlay each drawing in hopes that they would flow together as a whole as well as individually. Once the images were penciled, I scanned them into Photoshop and manipulated them into the composition of the final piece. After a few tweaks to get them “together” and not feeling as though they were separate drawings, I inked them. Then I drew the backgrounds in the same process. When all the elements were inked, I scanned them in and colored them in Photoshop.

For more about Ryan, see his bio on page 10 and visit him in Artists’ Alley at table #AA31.
Happy Birthday, Superman!

Superman celebrates his 75th anniversary this year. The Man of Steel—created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster—first appeared in Action Comics #1 in 1938 and was an instant hit. Since then, thousands of stories have been told about Clark Kent, Lois Lane, and all the good—and bad—people of Metropolis in comics, movies, TV, animation, and other media. Over the years, Superman has become one of the most recognizable fictional characters in the world, and with the June release of Zack Snyder’s Man of Steel movie, the hero is poised to rejoin the pantheon of great superhero movies.

Add to that list of thousands of stories Superman Unchained, the latest comic series devoted to the character, by writer Scott Snyder and artist Jim Lee. Jim—also the co-publisher of DC Comics—has created this exclusive art (see his pencils on the opposite page) for the cover of the WonderCon Anaheim 2013 Program Book.

In addition to Jim’s powerful pencils, here’s Scott Williams’ inked version (above) and Alex Sinclair’s final color art for the cover (at right).
I find that color is such a huge part of what’s attractive about a cover. I almost always send a color comp as a sketch because it communicates so much more effectively what the idea is going to be. If I had sent that in black and white someone might have looked at it and said, well, maybe we’ve seen something like this before, but the color treatment can change a lot of that, make it feel really special. So usually I go through a bunch of rounds of sketches just on my own and then there’s one that will kind of rise up from the rest and that’s the one I’ll work up into a color comp. I like to send my best work as opposed to sending something good and then two other crappy things, because sometimes people will pick the worst of the bunch. So you have to be committed to whatever you send.
I usually work digitally so inking this was a challenge, but I was up for it! I did the sketch digitally and then printed it out large and taped it to a light box. From there I did two rounds of tighter sketches and then the third drawing I inked. It was a different way of working, but actually pretty fun! Made me feel like I was back in art school! Hah!

The color palette was a total happy accident! I was flatting the colors and made her cowl “shine” hot pink and I kind of loved it and just let it influence the colors in the rest of the piece! I just wanted it to feel fresh, different, and fun! Plus you can never go wrong with pink!

Thank you, WonderCon for giving me this opportunity! I hope everyone enjoys the final result. I for one can’t wait to get the T-shirt! ;)

There were 3 roughs here because I wanted to get it just right and I hadn’t drawn something this tight and traditional in quite a while, because I usually work all digital. My first sketch had a much more detailed city, really just playing around with ideas. But in my heart I wanted it to be more graphic, so I simplified it for the final. I think I still like my sketch better, but that’s a very common thing for artists to feel...!

I added some bats here because I always wanted to draw them with Batgirl but I hadn’t had a chance yet in the book! It was very Batman: The Animated Series of me to want to do it. (One of my favorite incarnations of Batgirl!) It adds a little something extra I think! ;)

Art TM & © DC Comics
What was your initial response to hearing we wanted to do a Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice cover?

My first response was "AWESOME!" I was really excited for the opportunity. Personally, I've been really excited about this film, and love all of the costume designs we have seen so far. So when you're asked to create an image that incorporates those designs and channel some of the feeling of the film, it's always a great opportunity.

What were your thoughts behind this cover layout?

For Justice League, I've been doing these "movie poster" style layouts, instead of just a standard image of characters fighting. I've been studying the work of Drew Struzan and trying to bring some of that out in the covers we've been doing for that book. So I thought it might be neat to bring that style over here for this cover.

The movie poster layout style allows you to get some big images of characters on the page (Superman and Batman), mixed with some smaller full-body images (Wonder Woman), and some action scenes (Batman fighting Superman, plus the Batmobile). I also thought it would be neat to show Gotham and Metropolis behind each character, showing the divide between our heroes. In the end, I feel the image turned out like I first imagined it, and with Brad Anderson's brilliant colors, it really came to life!

This piece was created digitally. What's the difference for you working that way?

Working digitally is very similar to working on the page. The only difference is that I feel I have much more control over the placement of objects, and the freedom to make infinite mistakes.

I work on a special monitor called a Wacom Cintiq. It is a giant 24" monitor that I use a stylus with and draw directly on.

I start with a super rough layout, using a program called Manga Studio, just as I would on paper. This allows me to rough out the layout and find where I want to place all of my characters and elements. Once that gets the okay, I start to work on each character, slowly building up the details, form, and anatomy. This is where the image changes the most. Sometimes elements don't work and you need to redo those elements. I rely on my instinct quite a lot and if something feels off, I will change it or redo it.

Once I have the image tightened and roughed out to the point where I'm happy, I'll start the "inking" phase, which involves using a different pen tool and drawing over the image in tighter blacks. Sometimes I will print out the image I've drawn on physical paper in blue-line mode and hand ink the image. But that only happens when time permits, as it adds an extra stage and time to the process.

Each character and element is drawn on separate layers, which allows me to resize or move these elements in order to create the best image layout I can.

Once the inks get the okay, I'll export the image and send it over to my colorist, Brad Anderson, to work his wizardry on the final art.

How closely do you work with Brad, and what did you discuss about this cover?

Brad is one of the best color artists in the business and I'm a lucky guy to get the opportunity to work with him. I've loved his work over Gary Frank for years and wanted that same look and understanding of lighting over my work. Finding a color artist that you like and that you feel enhances your foreword is a tough thing. Many colorists lay down flat, bland colors over an artist's work, but I wanted a colorist who would take my work up to the next level, adding form, lighting, shadows, and depth to the art. Brad "gets it." I tend to draw my characters using a two-light setup. One light is the main light, giving the character its shadows and depth, but I also like to use a rim light, which shines on the opposite side of the face. If colored correctly, it gives an immediate three-dimensional look to the character. Gary Frank does the same thing in his work, so I knew Brad would be a great fit over my own.

When we first started working together, I would give Brad notes and even some rough color style guides to give him an idea of what I was thinking. But now, I just trust his judgment. He understands what I want, and delivers every time.

For those times where I have a specific vision, I'll give him some reference or comment that I envision certain tones to make up the colors for the final image. For the WonderCon cover, I specifically wanted the image to resemble the movie posters and promo work that the producers have been releasing, so I included some reference of those posters and of the characters, and that was it. When I received the image back, I was blown away by the colors.

It's also a little-known fact, but Brad colored the very first cover I had ever done for DC Comics, Teen Titans: Cold Case #1. So maybe our work partnership was meant to be!

Color artist Brad Anderson talks about his color process on the next page!

Initial thumbnail sketch

Detail sketch

Finished inks
BRAD ANDERSON’S COLORS

**STAGE 1**
Line Art

**STAGE 2**
Separating elements on page.
Not concerned about color choices at this stage.

**STAGE 3**
Paint bucket proper color.
Begin rendering.
Final stage is to add FX, glows, etc.
Michael Cho has drawn a few stories and a large variety of covers for publishers, including Marvel, DC, and Image. He’s also received a few awards and nominations for his work along the way. His first graphic novel, Shoplifter, was published by Pantheon and debuted on the New York Times Bestsellers List. He is currently working on a follow-up project.

Here’s the final stages of the art, including an inked version (upper left), the cover “rough” showing type placement, both for the title and additional copy and the blocking in of tones on the figures (upper right), and Michael’s final, fully rendered cover, which includes a playful and colorful type treatment for the title and the thing that ties it all together, that soft, tan background color. For the final cover as it was printed just close the book and take a look!

You can meet Michael at WonderCon at his Artists’ Alley table (F-1) during the show. He’s also featured on panels, including “Cover Story” on Sunday, where he and other special guests discuss the art of creating comics covers.

For more on our cover artist, visit his website “Michael Cho’s Sketchbook” at michaelcho.com. And to read Michael’s comics work, pick up his graphic novel, Shoplifter, published by Pantheon in 2014.
Eighty years ago, two young men from Cleveland, Ohio had their dreams come true. After years of rejection, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster finally succeeded in getting their signature creation, Superman, published. National Allied Publications (now known as DC Comics) featured the “visitor from another planet” on the cover of Action Comics #1. Now, 999 issues later, Action is poised for its 1000th issue in April.

We asked special guest Dan Jurgens to come up with a Superman cover for the WonderCon Anaheim 2018 Program Book to commemorate this amazing milestone. Jurgens has been associated with the Man of Steel for over a quarter century as one of the main creators involved with the classic “Death of Superman” storyline in the 1990s and reintroducing the classic Clark Kent and Lois Lane into the recent Rebirth continuity. We quizzed Dan about his cover, which was inked by long-time collaborator Norm Rapmund, and colored by colorist Alex Sinclair.

You sent us three separate sketches. Did you have a particular favorite?

DJ: Fortunately, I preferred the one that was selected! There’s something about Superman with the American flag that feels very iconic and appropriate for commemorating 80 years of Superman. It just feels right.

If we were to go back through some of the more iconic and memorable Superman and Action Comics covers, we’d find Superman and the flag paired on more than a few of them. They fit together well, both thematically and visually. The colors work together and create a striking image.

You’ve been associated with Superman for over 25 years. What keeps bringing you back?

DJ: Superman is a remarkably deep and rich character. On the one hand, the scope of his powers allows a writer to tell a story as big as the cosmos. At the same time, his down-to-earth nature and family situation with Lois and Jon open the door to all sorts of meaningful, personal drama. That’s fertile ground for a writer and I keep finding that I have stories left to tell. It’s a really fabulous playground.
Eisner Award–winning letterer Todd Klein re-created the iconic Superman logo for the WonderCon Anaheim 2018 cover logo. The logo is one of the most-recognized (and imitated) in the world. Todd, who not only is one of the most-awarded letterers in comics, is also a historian on the topic of lettering.

TK: As Siegel and Shuster developed the character, Shuster devised different logos, and by the time of their newspaper strip tryout, he had settled on one that is essentially the Superman logo we know today. The newspaper strip samples did not sell to the syndicates, and when the strip was finally bought as a serial for Action Comics in 1938, a cover logo for the character was not yet needed. When Superman gained his own title in 1939, Joe Shuster was drawing the covers, and his Superman logo appeared on each one, but instead of designing it once and making photographic copies to use on later issues, he was redrawing it each time, with results that varied quite a lot. This was not what was needed for a licensed and trademarked character, and in 1940, letterer/designer Ira Schnapp was brought in to create a more professional logo from Shuster’s ideas. The Schnapp version first appeared on Superman #6, dated Sept.-Oct. 1940. It was exactly what the book and character needed, and it remained the standard Superman logo until a redesign in 1983. That’s 43 years, a very long life for any logo design! Many people, including myself, feel it’s one of the best comics logos of all time. Ira took elements from all the Shuster versions, standardized the width and shape of the letters, made the telescoping (the extension into three dimensions) consistent, and used accurate and complex three-point perspective, which Shuster’s work only guessed at. It remains one of the most recognizable and loved logos of any kind around the world. The 1983 revision by the Milton Glaser Studio made sensible changes and adjustments but adheres to the Schnapp design in many important ways, so Ira’s legacy lives on into the present era, and will probably continue for many years to come.

For an in-depth look at how Todd created the WonderCon 2018 logo, visit his blog at: kleinletters.com/Blog/designing-the-wonder-con-2018-logo
Detective Comics recently celebrated its 1000th issue. Created in 1937 as one of the first ongoing comic book titles with all-new material, it’s popularity led to the company becoming known as DC Comics (DC for Detective Comics). Besides that 1000th issue benchmark, 2019 marks the 80th anniversary of the Caped Crusader, the Dark Knight, the Gotham Guardian, the one-and-only Batman. Since first appearing in Detective Comics #27 in 1939, Batman has gone on to become one of the most recognizable and popular fictional heroes in the world. Created by cartoonist Bob Kane with writer Bill Finger, the Dark Knight has since been blessed with an amazing line-up of comics creators, from Kane, Finger, and Jerry Robinson in the early years, to Dick Sprang (1940s – 50s), Carmine Infantino (1960s), Neal Adams (1960s, ’70s, and beyond), Frank Miller (1980s), Norm Breyfogle and Kelley Jones (1990s), and Jim Lee, and Greg Capullo (2000s and 2010s), just to mention a few. Add to that list Lee Weeks, who recently became a Bat-artist.

We asked Lee to create this year’s WonderCon Anaheim 2019 Program Book cover (also available as the official WCA T-shirt from our friends at Graphitti Designs), and he came up with an image that sums up the stark, dramatic power of the character, standing on a Gotham City rooftop, lit up by the Bat-signal, ready to take on any villain or threat. Lee, sadly, couldn’t join us for this year’s WonderCon, but we did talk to him about his cover (which features his own inks and color art), and the thrill he gets being able to draw some of comics’ greatest heroes.

You sent us a number of thumbnail sketches for the cover to this book … which was your favorite and why?

I prefer different details in each of the sketches, but the one that was actually chosen for the cover has a bit more depth, detail, and a fuller sense of the Batman mystique with the shadowy backdrop. I would say it is my favorite, but I’d have been happy to draw any of the others.

In your long career, you’ve drawn some of the most popular characters in comics: Hulk, Daredevil, and now Batman. What is the appeal to an artist to draw such iconic characters?

It really stems from my childhood and what those characters meant to me growing up. Especially early in my career, I had a strong yearning to work on those characters that I grew up with — characters that helped establish a moral compass in my life and gave me a great sense of adventure. Of course, I came to love working on others, too, but those that I’d lived with had the strongest pull.

What was it like working on such a strange team-up like the Batman/Elmer Fudd Special?

I think it’s safe to admit now, but a small part of me was a bit disappointed when I was first asked to work on that book. I was not aware of the other similar crossovers (WB cartoon characters with DC Comics characters) and could not imagine it being more than a gag. But Dan DiDio asked me personally and told me the writer would be Tom King. Those two points were really the reason I agreed to do it. Then a very strange thing happened … a week or so after Tom and I had a discussion about how to approach the book, I got the script, and within a week of reading it and breaking it down, I told a couple close friends that I might be working on one of the best books I’ve ever been a part of.

The Batman/Elmer Fudd Special went on to help Tom King win the Eisner Award for Best Writer in 2018, and landed Lee an ongoing berth as one of the artists on the Batman title, also written by Tom King. Their most recent collaboration was the memorable “Cold Days” arc featuring Mr. Freeze.