



Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing Comics and Graphic Novels

Brian Michael Bendis, Joe Quesada (Foreword)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing Comics and Graphic Novels

Brian Michael Bendis , Joe Quesada (Foreword)

Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing Comics and Graphic Novels Brian Michael Bendis , Joe Quesada (Foreword)

Best-selling Marvel Comics writer Brian Michael Bendis reveals the comic book writing secrets behind his work on *The Avengers*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *All-New X-Men*, and more.

One of the most popular writers in modern comics, Brian Michael Bendis reveals the tools and techniques he and other top creators use to create some of the most popular comic book and graphic novel stories of all time. *Words for Pictures* shows readers the creative methods of a writer at the very top of his field. Bendis guides aspiring creators through each step of the comics-making process—from idea to script to finished sequential art—for fan favorite comics like *The Avengers*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Uncanny X-Men*, and more. Along the way, tips and insights from other working writers, artists, and editors provide a rare, extensive look behind the creative curtain of the comics industry. With script samples, a glossary of must-know business terms for writers, and interactive comics-writing exercises, *Words for Pictures* provides the complete toolbox needed to jump start the next comics-writing success story.

Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing Comics and Graphic Novels Details

Date : Published July 22nd 2014 by Watson-Guptill (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9780770434359

Author : Brian Michael Bendis , Joe Quesada (Foreword)

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Language, Writing, Nonfiction, Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Art, Business



[Download Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing Com ...pdf](#)



[Read Online Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing C ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing Comics and Graphic Novels Brian Michael Bendis , Joe Quesada (Foreword)

From Reader Review Words for Pictures: The Art and Business of Writing Comics and Graphic Novels for online ebook

Gamal Hennessy says

As a child, the first book I recall getting my hands on about the comic book industry was How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way. After I got out of law school, I got my hands on Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud. The first book exposed me to comics as a technical skill and not just a bunch of cool pictures. The second book reintroduced me to comics as an art form and not just a childish obsession. Words for Pictures is a book on the same level. It describes the creative and practical aspects of comics as a business and belongs on the radar of anyone with any interest in the medium.

Brian Michael Bendis is an award winning writer who has worked on seminal franchises including Spider-Man, X-Men and Guardians of the Galaxy. He's also had success with his own original titles including Powers, Torso and Scarlet. Bendis brings years of experience to Words, walking an aspiring creator through major aspects of the writing business including:

- 1) The motivations for writing
- 2) The form and function of the script
- 3) Collaboration with editors and artists and;
- 4) Protecting your business interests

Bendis doesn't just rely on his own perspective for this book. He adds the insights from dozens of top writers, artists and editors to create a behind the scenes look into the business that is now driving the blockbuster movie industry. One of the most important lessons in the book gets a chapter to itself. Bendis advises anyone and everyone who gets into comics on any level to protect their creative investment by seeking out and listening to lawyers and accountants when it comes to handling their career.

Even if you're not interesting in writing comic books, Words for Pictures still has value. If you're a writer on any level, the advice he offers transcends the comic book page and extends out to novelists, playwrights and screenwriters. If you simply love iconic artwork, Words is filled with art from some of the top comic book artists of the past and present. In the same way you don't have to read comics to enjoy comic book movies, you can enjoy Words for Pictures without trying to be the next Walt Simonson or Brian Michael Bendis.

Have fun.

Gamal

Stewart Tame says

I'd go so far as to say that this is one of the better How To Write books that I've read. Bendis brings his considerable expertise and enthusiasm to bear on the topic, and provides bountiful examples, and not just from his own work, either. Indeed, there are several chapters in which various writers, artists, and editors are encouraged to give their own, sometimes differing, opinions on the subject. There are copious illustrations along with the text, showing comics pages in various stages of production, from rough thumbnails, to final art. There's even a chapter devoted to contracts, which is something I don't think I've seen in any other book

of this type. This book will not turn you into a comic book writer, but, if that's what you desire to be, it should very likely help make you a better one.

Bobby says

The book is sold as a "how to write and get into the business of being a comic book writer." And to that, it has a lot of basic information, but very few actual tips and tools to show you how to do it.

A quick example: the importance of a cliffhanger is highlighted and explained. Everyone who has watched a TV show or read a comic knows what a cliffhanger is. What isn't explained is how to actually construct one. What are the story elements and character elements that go into the cliffhanger? Understanding that story element as a writer is far different than recognizing it as a viewer.

The best advice the book has is for when you're writing scripts for an artist and how to approach that level of collaboration. It's very good instruction for someone who already understands how to create characters, dramatic tension, etc., but getting to that point? You're on your own, kid.

It's a good book for what it is. It's a motivating, kick in the butt book for people who have never studied dramatic writing. The interviews with Matt Fraction and Ed Brubaker stand out... but will this book tell you what you need to know about the actual skin and bones of writing a story? Probably not.

Jordan says

I had been looking forward to this book for a long time and had very high hopes, so some disappointment should probably be expected. But my, what a letdown. Bendis is probably the most open comic creator on the planet, and his lively letters columns and Q&A sessions are always full of helpful, honest advice. I assumed this book would expand on those and add some new depth to the conversation, resulting in a really valuable resource. Instead, it's all very vague, sparse and more basic than basic. And more than half of it is taken up with pictures! Not "here is how to lay out a page" type examples, but just pretty pictures of Spider-Man that are nothing but filler.

It's neither a pie-in-the-sky "work hard and you can do it!" self-help book, nor a dry examination of rules and form, which I appreciate. The interviews with artists and editors were the most enlightening, laying out exactly what they look for in a writer and what annoys them. The tone is conversational and entertaining throughout. I was just hoping for more.

Joey Cruz says

A must-read for writers wanting to get into the comics business. Bendis is the name on the cover, but what he does is compile the thoughts, experiences, and advice of all of his professional comic creator friends in interviews that touch on every essential topic an aspiring comic creator should know.

Jason Pym says

This is more like “an introduction to...”, and while it has some interesting information and points you in the right direction, it does not go into the nuts and bolts of any aspect of comic book writing: This is not the place to find information on character, plot and good dialogue, or even comic specific information that you find in McCloud’s Understanding Comics (which I thought this would be like). To give an example, there’s a chapter on the business side of things by Bendis’ wife which has a list of legal terms that you would do well to consider in a business contract; more useful and interesting (to me, anyway) would have been actual sample contracts.

It is also specifically geared toward writing for the big corporate companies (Marvel/DC*). So the information we do get is advice on how to communicate your story to the artist, someone that you have been partnered with by an editor and who you may never have met in person. This consists of lessons such as:

Pace out actions over a number of panels, never try and cram several plot points into one panel.
Do not stay in one location for more than, say, six pages, otherwise the story will lose momentum.
Give the artist a say in the story, whether that be a lot (through a Marvel-style one page character story) or just listening to their input on the layout of a single page.
Don’t forget until page 12 to tell the artist the hero is carrying a sword.
Etc.

There is a similar section with editor interviews, here the advice is things like: Send in pitches (ie, the whole story) not teasers – especially if you are an unknown, it’s not enough to know you can set a story up, you have to show you can finish it.

There was a couple things useful to prospective comics artists. First, when sending in your portfolio keep it under 4mb. Lead with comic book pages (with panels laid out) to show you can do the job: Just because you can do a splash image of Wolverine doesn’t mean you can put a story together.

My favourite thing from the book was Joe Quesada’s foreword, which is generally great but includes heartening words in a story about his daughter figure skating – “if you’re not falling (=failing) you’re not trying hard enough”. That works for most creative industries, I think.

All in all I was hoping for something a bit more detailed and substantial, but if what you’re looking for is how to write for big name superhero comics, this is a good place to start.

* There is not much mention of DC, all the interviews are with Marvel guys or the occasional Dark Horse guy, not that it makes much difference.

Todd says

There are no shortcuts.

There are no quick in's or out's.

There is just doing the work.

I've read many writing help books, from Stephen King to Steven Pressfield. From Deborah Chester to now Brian Michael Bendis. The one piece of advice set into the firmament is that you aren't going to find a magical way to get your words cranked out. There isn't a meat-grinder for ideas to turn them into sentences. There is simply reading and there is writing. And you will do it until you produce something finished. Finishing is the key to it all. No matter how long, short, malformed, or genius your idea is, FINISH IT. Sit down, and write every day. That's the message in all of these books. You're welcome.

NOW...

Having said that, there are a lot of variations that can spark your imagination and light a fire under your ass based on the personalities of the author. *ON WRITING*, from King was very formative for me, as I suspect he is for a lot of people. Many authors will dig into the minutiae of plot, character, editing, and so forth to give advice on how to tackle phases of the project. Bendis does a great job of this, because it's not only his book, with his experiences, he brings in the big guns of the comic book universe to provide their takes, perspectives, and advice.

Matt Fraction, Ed Brubaker, Walter Simonson, Bill Sienkiewicz, Sara Pichelli all make an appearance (and tons more too numerous to list) to talk about their experiences, good and bad. Editors like Tom Brevoort, Sana Amanat, and the great Diana Schutz talk about what they see, what they like, and what they don't like.

He gives concrete real examples of comic books scripts, using both Full Script method and Marvel Style, from different authors - and then talks to those authors about what they like to use and what they don't.

An interview with his wife, who runs the business end of his creative output, is incredibly valuable. Alisa Bendis talks about contracts, the law, and the business end of comic writing. More specifically on how to protect yourself. You don't see a lot of this type of advice out there and it's worth its weight in gold.

His best advice is sprinkled throughout the book - you probably won't make a lot of money making comic books. You are warned. Instead, do it because it burns inside of you. You need to get these stories out.

Good advice (abridged) literally from Bendis' Tumblr:

Write every day.

Write honestly.

Read.

Learn.

Caitlin says

I've been reading graphic novels for years but for the most part didn't bother to learn the business or process behind it. This is one of the best books I've read about the genre and easily the best on how writer and artists collaborate, the ways to get into the business and the mistakes to avoid if you want to break into the industry.

Despite being a regular reader and reviewer of graphic novels, I have to admit that prior to reading *Words for Pictures*, I had only a vague idea of the process. After having seen the deluxe editions of books like *Arkham*

Asylum and Kingdom Come, I was aware that the writer wrote a script and that they worked with artists to create the story. The exact details of that collaboration and in particular the differences between penciller, letterer and colorist were completely foreign to me. Words for Pictures does an excellent job of bringing the ambitious down to earth in terms of understanding how the graphic novel/comics industry works and how difficult it can be to break into. Bendis doesn't discourage potential artists and writers from doing so, just cautions them to be resilient to rejection and realistic. He also really emphasizes the necessary collaboration between artist(s) and writer(s) (when they aren't one and the same) and what to do (and what not to do) for your artist if you want to write comic books.

In addition to Bendis' own insight as a well-known author in the industry, he also brings in the opinions of other giants in the industry like Ed Brubaker and Walt Simonson (among many others). What I found particularly valuable were the Q and A segments with a number of different artists in the industry. It was eye opening to see what they liked and didn't like about working in the industry and what worked well for them versus what didn't. I think this book could seriously be a bible for those wanting to break into the industry as it even covers what editors are looking for and mistakes not to make when submitting work to them. I tended to skip the latter segments just because I was more interested in learning the process and the industry than in breaking into it. Because of Bendis' past work, it's heavily dominated by information on Marvel rather than DC and some of the independent publishers but it's still a great introduction and overview of the industry and how to get into it.

After having read Words for Pictures, I feel like I have a much better idea of the comics industry and the collaboration that goes into making the books that I enjoy so much. If you want to break into the industry, Words for Pictures would be a must-read!

Annice22 says

Borrowed from Publisher/NetGalley for an honest review.

This was full of information and I like this even more that it wasn't an "how to write" book. Because there is no perfect formula for writing the perfect story. The book does include interviews from some of the experts in the industry from writers to editors where they share their advice for dealing with the industry.

As a comic book fan, I see the final product but this book lets you see what goes on behind the scenes in a way because get to see what the writers and artists sometimes have to deal with just to see that book completed.

Anthony says

Brian Michael Bendis has written a lot of comics. A LOT OF COMICS. He's had several very successful runs on various Marvel titles, and has some critically acclaimed creator owned work to his name.

He's been a regular guest on a comic book podcast called Word Balloon for nearly 10 years and often answers fan questions, most of those questions being about the craft of writing and making comics.

More recently, he has taken to the blog site Tumblr to answer fan questions more directly on the business of writing.

So it makes sense that he would want to put out a book about writing comics and graphic novels.

In his book Words for Pictures, he covers all areas of working in comics. To script layouts, working with artists and working with editors. He even has a chapter dedicated to the business side of writing.

It's more of a coffee table print sized book. I was expecting it to be more like a traditional book, but it's a larger format. This is needed though because of all the art that's in here. The size and paper quality really helps show off the quality of the art.

It's a very comprehensive and enjoyable read. I'm not someone who is immediately looking to break into comics. Sure, I've thought about writing some of them and I've had a few ideas. But I am interested in the craft and process. I also like hearing the writers themselves talk about their own craft and process.

This book isn't just Bendis, either. He has many of his friends and collaborators contributing parts to make up the overall book. There's Matt Fraction talking about working with David Aja on Hawkeye. There's an editors round table which involves editors talking about how you should approach them and what they're looking for in new talent. There's a conversation between David Mack and Alex Maleev on how comic book art can be so much more than art. There's really a lot in here and I think it'd be a good read even to someone who isn't looking to write comics, but is interested in creating in general.

The book is about giving advice to new writers and tips on breaking in. The thing with comics is that staying in is as hard as breaking in, so the insight this book gives in regard to the relationship with your editor and artist is very useful.

I do have one problem with the book, however. Even though Bendis does get a lot of good writers and artists contributing to the book, they're either close friends of his or people he works with a lot. That makes sense because it probably made the book easier to put together, but that means there's a lack of DC and indie creators in here. There's cover blurbs from people like Geoff Johns, Warren Ellis and Jim Steranko talking about how good this book is, but why didn't they contribute anything to it?

There is a section of the book by Diana Schutz, who is a long time editor for Dark Horse comics, and has been behind books like Hellboy and 300. But this is only one part. In the editors round table section, only one editor is a non-marvel employee.

Also, all the examples of art used are pretty much exclusively Marvel or from Bendis' creator owned books. Again, this is probably down to legal reasons, but this could have been a much more comprehensive look at the business and craft if he could have included more DC and indie stuff. There's a similar problem with Grant Morrison's SuperGods, but in that case, there's little Marvel stuff involved.

Bendis is very much a Marvel company man, and it's great that Marvel let him use so much of their stuff in his book on writing. But how great would it be if, say, Frank Miller did a section of the book? (For all I know, though, Bendis might have asked him and he could have said no).

But this is still a really good read. It is to comics what Kings On Writing is to prose. It's also just an enjoyable read and never feels like a boring chore to get through.

Genevieve says

* Originally reviewed on the Night Owls Press blog here. *

Storytelling is a craft and a business. This is a central maxim in *Words for Pictures The Art and Business of Writing Comics and Graphic Novels* by Brian Michael Bendis.

Words for Pictures is a fascinating 101-type introduction to the world of visual storytelling—and it is one of the first books on this topic targeted directly at writers. With *Words for Pictures*, Bendis has written a modern-day guidebook to breaking into comics and graphic novels. Bendis himself is a bright fixture in the comic book scene. He was the creative force behind several superhero series including “Guardians of the Galaxy” (which has been turned into one of the biggest grossing movies in 2014), “The Avengers,” “Ultimate Spider-Man,” and others. He has also written independent comics and graphic novels, notably “Scarlet,” “Powers,” and “Torso.” Bendis is also an educator, teaching courses on comics and graphic novels at Portland State University and the University of Oregon.

All in all, especially for a comics newbie, *Words for Pictures* is a rare, special treat. Writers rarely talk about their creative process, let alone their work methods as candidly as Bendis does in this book. The complex tradecraft of the visual storyteller is shared generously and honestly in this book. What does the editorial workflow look like? What components should go in a submission package? How should you write your script? What are the merits of the two dominant script forms, full script and Marvel-style? With this book, Bendis peels back the layers of the work process and the business, giving readers a better understanding of the industry and the people working in it.

Words for Pictures follows a tradition of books on the craft that include Dennis O’Neil’s *The DC Comics Guide to Writing Comics*, Alan Moore’s *Writing for Comics*, and Will Eisner’s *Comics and Sequential Art*. What separates this book from others is that it delves a little less into the creative process and more into the work process—the profession and craft of comics and graphic novels.

Bendis starts the book by disabusing starry-eyed notions of going into comics to make it big. Writing isn’t glamorous; it’s hard work. As a writer and educator, Bendis has no illusions about how hard it is to break into the industry. He writes: “Go to the bookstore and walk up to the Harry Potter books. … [L]ook around the Harry Potter books and you will find authors who have ideas and characters that may be better than Harry Potter… but they are not Harry Potter. … They are fine writers who are putting something out there into the world that wasn’t there before. And I am here to tell you those very same authors are still working at their day jobs and have no idea what happened.” His point: You have to have the right motivations to get into this business. Don’t do this for the fame and fortune. This realistic perspective is a unifying thread throughout the rest of the book. Writing is a craft, and to be successful at it you have to keep learning your craft and get better at the work process.

For most of the book Bendis shows readers the technical aspects of writing and working with illustrators, letterers, colorists, and editors. He shows writers how to put together a good submission package, from pitch letters to scripts. His step-by-step approach delineates the process and is accompanied by a lot of examples from his own work and the work of others, including excerpts and scans of actual scripts, editing notes, and artwork drafts at every stage from sketches to lettering to coloring. Reading *Words for Pictures* feels like an exclusive backstage pass; you get to see a finished product deconstructed, and see the amount of work that goes into making those panels on that page.

What really makes this book sing is that a large part of it is focused on the collaborative process, both between writers and artists, and writers and editors. The cardinal rule: The script is written for the artist—it isn't written for the reader. “Your script is a 10,000 word letter to an artist.” Learning how to communicate your story to artists through the right amount of descriptive action and dialogue, while also taking into account your artist-partner's visual style, is what drives the success of a comic. When a story has good pacing and rhythm through the visuals, when the action is not too cramped inside the panels, and when the dialogue isn't superfluous—all these are testaments to effective collaboration.

Working with editors is the other important form of collaboration explored in *Words for Pictures*. As a book editor at Night Owls Press, I can most identify with this. Our collaborative partnerships have since expanded to visual artists for our Turn of Phrase ESL book series. To Bendis, editors matter. Editors are the ones who hire you. In many ways, they are the gatekeepers and they are a comic brand's guardians. They are also the ones who push writers to produce their best work. The advice offered here can be applied to many other types of literary work. The chapter on editors includes a wonderful section written by Diana Schutz, the editor-in-chief of Dark Horse Comics, that offers an insider's look into how to make a submission stand out and how to get an editor's attention. Not surprisingly, it's not simply about having a great idea but presenting those ideas well, which all speaks to a writer's professional integrity and ability to execute and follow through. In my own work reviewing manuscript submissions, I'm always most impressed by writers who present their ideas well, who take the time to follow our guidelines, and who have taken the time to develop a website or portfolio of work. Basically, show, don't tell. According to Schutz, nothing grabs an editor's attention more than that portfolio, especially one filled with finished products. In other words, if you're going to write comic books and graphic novels, finish them. Schutz advises writers to put together finished stories to show that you understand the principles of narrative tension, plot arcs, and characterization.

Words for Pictures includes a treasure trove of interviews with dozens of writers, artists, and editors. In some parts, though, it feels as if Bendis was overwhelmed by so much information and access to people. There are several sections where Bendis just aggregates responses in a free-form fashion, particularly in the section “Artists on Writers.” The information is rich and insightful here, but the Q&A style feels as if you're reading a transcript. Bendis's role as our guide just disappears. The free-running responses, which often echo each other, feel like bloat. Better editing and integration of interviewee responses would have made a dramatic improvement.

By the end of the book, Bendis gives us a chapter on how to run your business. His wife and business partner takes over here and gives an extensive discussion on the topic. The most important takeaway: Contracts can make or break your business.

I would have loved to see more detail on the technical craft of writing for the visual medium: how to do cliffhangers, how to write dialogue, or how to distill plot to the barest elements. Finally, there is also a gaping lack of distinction between writing comic books and graphic novels, as well as no reference to other writing traditions like Japanese manga.

Overall, *Words for Pictures* is a beginner's look at being a comic book writer. But what's appealing about this book is that it will resonate with anyone who has an interest in storytelling or works in a profession where creative partnerships are the norm. It is full of rich personal detail, including anecdotes from Bendis and advice and insights from his impressive roster of colleagues in the industry, many of whom are rockstars in the world of comics. You'll relish the deep look into this professional creator's mind.

[Disclaimer: I received this book from Blogging for Books for an honest and candid review.]

Ian says

One of the silliest books of art theory I've ever read.

The introductory chapter is about how Bendis isn't famous and how most people don't know JK Rowling's name. Even if either of those statements were vaguely true, why do they belong in this book? Right off the bat, it reads like a first draft.

The chapters about process read more like Tumblr FAQs than art theory. What few insights Bendis offers get driven into the ground without elaboration, ultimately streaming back to his main point: "I dunno, man, there are a whole bunch of approaches you can take; just try to be good at it or whatever."

Mind-blowing.

It seems like this is a book designed to make you feel like you're hanging out with Bendis and his pals and co-workers, and yeah, they're talking about process, but they're answering the sort of vapid questions they'd get at conventions.

Call me shallow, but I'm not very interested in what annoys Walter Simonson about collaboration. I want to understand where and why Bendis chooses to split panels in his scripts; his process for developing and introducing new characters; how he re-imagines established characters for the Ultimate universe; how writing for super-heroes differs from writing other genres, and so on.

There's a wealth of talent and knowledge in that head of his, but--just like his comics for the last decade--he's only teased us with the prospect of sharing it.

Trey Piepmeier says

Fantastic. I'm glad I came across this book in my search for advice and information on the world of comic book writing. There are parts of this I'm going to refer to often, I'm sure.

While this book is directed at people who are interested in writing comics, I think it would interest anyone who enjoys reading comics as well. I found it fascinating to realize that a comic book writer basically writes for an audience of one; the artist. Because of that, there's no standard format for a comic script like there is for a screenplay. Whatever works for those two people is what matters.

Sam Quixote says

I've never taken a creative writing course in my life but I've never understood why anyone would if the teacher was an unknown writer, as most tend to be. The only "how to write" book I've ever read was "On Writing" by Stephen King, which made sense to me as he's an enormously successful novelist - of course he's worth listening to! - and it also turned out to be a very entertaining read, one of King's best in fact.

Similarly, Brian Michael Bendis is best placed to pen a "how to write comics" book as he's one of the most popular comics writers in the world, having written for many years at the world's biggest comics publisher,

Marvel. Who better to learn writing for comics than this guy? *Words for Pictures* is a fantastic look at all of the aspects of writing comics as well as the comics industry as a whole, and would definitely be invaluable to anyone seriously looking into a comics career.

That said, Bendis comes right out of the gate with some hard truths: in comics, there's no money and there's no fame - and this is coming from a guy at the top of his profession! Do it because you love it, he says, and it's fine advice for any profession you choose, writing or otherwise, but especially true for comics when even a guy like Bendis doesn't make bank - well, he makes a decent living but he's not rich like if he were top of other artistic mediums eg. movies, music.

Reading *Words for Pictures*, I realised how repetitive "how to write" books are, if they're being honest. Bendis quotes King's advice: "Read a lot, write a lot", and really there's little else to add, at least in terms of writing advice. Study what you like, break it down and see why it works, power through the failures, keep at it etc. - obvious kinda stuff.

But this book isn't about motivation - it's a practical guide to writing comics. Bendis assumes the reader knows nothing about comics and goes from there, a fine approach to draw in the largest possible audience.

Firstly, Bendis explains the difference between full script and Marvel style, the two most popular approaches to writing comics. If you've read a few "deluxe" trade paperbacks (usually by Neil Gaiman or Alan Moore), the publisher will include full scripts at the back so you can see what a comics script is like - at a glance it resembles a screenplay but look closer and you'll see panel breakdowns and guidelines for the artist. Bendis writes this way.

Marvel style was pioneered by Stan Lee back in the days when he had to produce 12 monthly titles. Lee would write a few pages of outline and then hand it to one of the artists who would take the story, break it down into panels and pages, draw it, and hand it back to Lee, who would fill in the captions/dialogue. It's a loose, less controlled approach but one where the collaboration between writer and artist strongly favours the artist as opposed to the full script method.

Marvel style is rarely used today but it turns out Matt Fraction utilised this approach in writing his and David Aja's acclaimed Hawkeye run. And here's a surprise: you'd think this book would be all Bendis but it's actually comprised of contributions from a great many people in the comics industry. Fraction supplies an essay on Hawkeye and his writing process and partnership with Aja, and later on there are extended sections where Bendis fires questions at a group of the biggest artists and editors in the field, collating their answers in a lengthy Q&A.

The Fraction essay was a pleasant surprise as I'm a huge fan of Hawkeye and was fascinated with the utter chaos that is the reality of a Hawkeye script! Fraction includes photostats of his handwritten notes as well as thumbnails by Aja, all of which look appropriately loose and dirty like Clint Barton's life in the book, and in sharp contrast to the neat, perfectly compressed comics we see as the final product.

The likes of Michael Allred, Skottie Young, Jill Thompson, Mark Bagley, Klaus Janson, Walt Simonson, Sara Pichelli, and a few others go through the do's and don'ts of how a writer/artist relationship should work, what they look for in a script, and other helpful tips. All of the artists in the book also have numerous examples of their work at different stages of completion displayed throughout so that the book's text is broken up with gorgeous (mostly Marvel) art.

A gaggle of Marvel editors and Dark Horse's Scott Allie explain the editor's role and the pitfalls most

writers tend to drop into, as well as how to catch an editor's eye and get hired (short answer: create your own comic. Repeat.).

An interview with CB Cebulski, Marvel's chief talent scout, goes into what he looks for in possible candidates to hire (don't send unsolicited pitches, especially if they include Marvel characters - they legally can't read them anyway and will be discarded immediately - but, again, instead create your own stuff and don't call them, they'll call you), while Bendis' wife and business partner goes through what every comics creator should do to avoid getting ripped off (you don't want to be a Siegel/Shuster cautionary tale should your creation take off!).

Most of the participants in this book are Marvel affiliated and there are no DC editors/personnel contributing to the book, nor are there professionals from Image, IDW, Oni, and other comics companies represented here (Scott Allie and Diana Schutz from Dark Horse are the only non-Marvel professionals).

However, this book isn't aimed at writers looking to write Marvel comics specifically - this book contains advice that's applicable from someone setting out to write their first web-comic to someone writing the latest Ultimate Spider-Man issue. It looks heavily Marvel flavoured but it's all about comics, whatever the brand, and gives you an idea of the expectations in the comics industry. There's also no guarantee that even if you do get hired at Marvel for a comic, you'll get asked to do another one, so don't put all your eggs in the Marvel basket - think more broadly and create your own stuff instead.

I'm not an aspiring comics writer but I am a devoted comics reader and thoroughly enjoyed this look behind the scenes at how everything is put together, from soup to nuts. It's an eye-opening and enormously informative read that's worth a look even if you're not a wannabe writer and just a comics reader. There's a lot of stuff here that'll make you appreciate the comics you read every week and get much more out of them too.

And if you are looking to get into comics, this book will be like the freakin' Bible to you! Every single aspect of the process is laid out and explored by professionals in an easy to understand and practical way. Words for Pictures is a must-read for anyone looking to get started in comics writing with plenty of useful information from a writer at the top of his game.

Mike says

In a word: awesome.
