

Jake Friedman



An Interview with Alejandro Arbona

Alejandro Arbona graduated NYU film (where he was this writer's TA in John Culhane's History of Animation class) and has been an assistant editor in the Marvel Comics publishing department for the past two years.

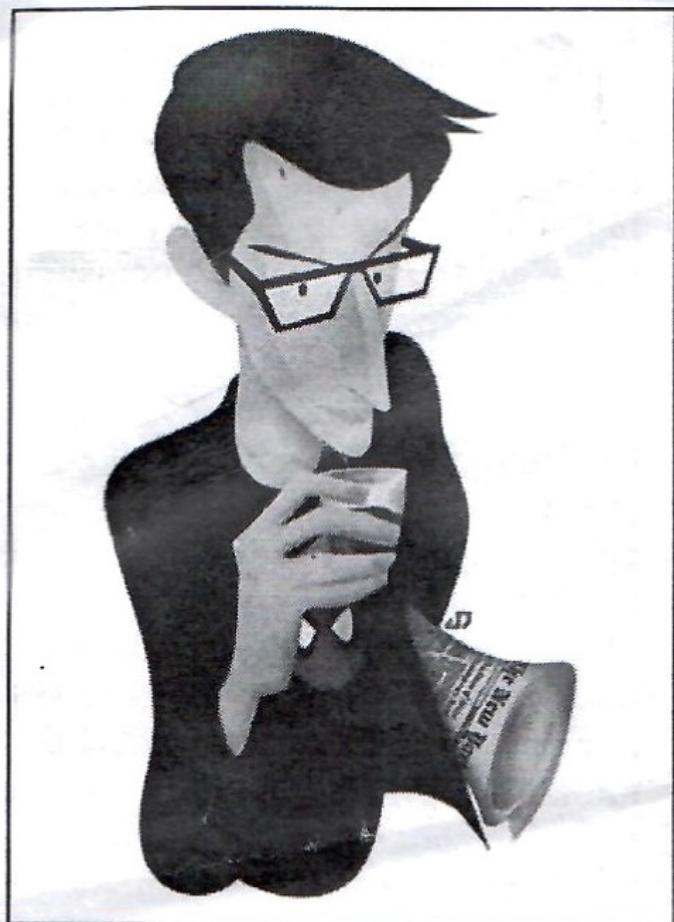
What's an average day at work?

On average, the 9 to 5 (which ends up being more like the 9:30 to 7 on a good day) tends to involve reading scripts, a back-and-forth on feedback with my writers, comparing notes with my boss and other senior editors, looking at art, giving the artists notes or approval on the clarity of visual storytelling, fielding hundreds of e-mails and a dozen or two phone calls, going over colored pages for quality and continuity, reading lettering proofs, polishing comics that are close to final and, toward the back end of most work weeks, sending books out to the printers. And if time permits, collaborating with writers and artists to develop pitches, outlines and scripts for future projects.

What project are you proudest of having been part of?

This is an easy question. I had the chance of a lifetime when I got to edit a hell of a piece of work entitled

"Fantastic Four: ¡Isla de la Muerte!" It was a one-shot comic that brought the FF to my native Puerto Rico, where they investigated the mystery of el chupacabras. It was a real labor of love, and a ton of hard work, but readers loved the hell out of it, and my fellow Puerto Ricans were overjoyed. We also took the groundbreaking step of simultaneously releasing a Spanish-language edition of the issue, nationwide, which was an industry first.



What's the hardest thing about your job?

It's a job in the publishing industry first and foremost, which is always deadline-driven, tense and extremely demanding, and requires the seamless collaboration of multiple parties. An added challenge is that, when you're reading a comic you're supposed to be editing, you tend to get caught up in the fun of what you're looking at, and you have to remind yourself to bring every ounce of your critical faculties and editorial instinct to hone the sharp ends, trim the fat and make sure all the moving parts are well oiled.

What's the biggest perk?

Get outta here. Haven't you ever heard of Spider-Man? Daredevil? Iron Fist? I work with those guys every day of the week.

Why did you choose to do what you're doing?

While I had been a voracious comics reader up through adolescence, I fell out of it during my college years and afterwards, with only the occasional dalliance in some collected volume that I could pick up on the casual, once-in-a-blue-moon foray into a comics shop. But the whims of building a career in entertainment and editorial brought me to employment at a comics journalism outlet, where I rediscovered the wonder of the medium, and nurtured a love and a critical knowledge of it bigger than I'd ever known before. After that, I was determined to stay in the comics industry, but I felt compelled to aim for the

big leagues in my next job: something creative, something challenging and something on the inside. As luck would have it, patience and dedication paid off, and I was rewarded with an editorial position at Marvel. Couldn't have asked for better.

How do I get to be where you are now?

There's no singular answer to this question. Several members of our editorial staff have come up through the internship program. Other editorial types have come to us from outside industries such as journalism, marketing and film. And some people just lucked into a spot where nobody knew their name or what they did so they didn't dare fire them. And of course, Marvel doesn't live off the labor of the editorial department alone; we also have a corps of marketing folks, designers, salespeople, custom publishing-type persons and all the other professionals it takes to run a huge corporation.

Impossible Man vs. Slapstick - who would win?

I'll have to go with Impossible Man here. He's a Popuppian, nigh omnipotent by our grossly limited, third-dimensional, bottom-feeding standards, while Slapstick's basically just a guy who got some crazy powers. But that's just my opinion; if you want a concrete answer, you'll have to gather a colloquy of message board posters. They'll set you straight.