

EMPTY



ISSN 1449-5155



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EMPTY ISSUE 07
\$10.00 AUS IN

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CONOR HARRINGTON | NATE VAN DYKE | BLEK LE RAT
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VAN DUKE
JULY 2004

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"I'M SURE PSYCHIATRISTS WOULD HAVE A FIELD DAY WITH ME. IN FACT, THEY ALREADY HAVE."

I haven't seen Nate Van Dyke's medical records, but I believe him. His slick cyberpunk jizz-stain dystopia would have any mother worth her salt in tears. Nude red headed pin-ups splay across the bloody intestines of a dead robot, hairless cyborgs give each other blowjobs, a demonic manchild tears away at his rib cage while blood pours from the top of his horn-adorned head – grotesque motifs as delightfully cartoonish and horrid as *Tales From the Crypt* or *Troma*, with slashings of *Terminator* thrown in. They're as free flowing and crudely shocking as the sketches mothers snatch from misbehaving but creative sons who trade them at recess, but are rendered with the sleek refinement of an illustrator who feels equally at home composing for a gallery or a corporate client.

Van Dyke is an exhibiting artist and a corporate illustrator whose work has appeared in *Xbox* and *Playstation* magazines, cult comic anthology *Heavy Metal*, on Converse ads and on Converse shoes. He describes himself as "the kid who always liked crayons more than anybody else", and out of high school, where his obsession with drawing continued, he rejected art school scholarship offers to pursue his craft solo. It's a decision that he says has paid for itself.

"I see a lot of these kids that are coming out of art school and if you know the school and instructors you can spot it in their work. They develop crushes on their teachers and put them up on pedestals and often times mimic their work. There are also a lot of teachers out there that I think are under qualified."

Not only to teach, but also to critique. He is as harsh a taskmaster as he'll ever need, but, thankfully, one that he has started to win over. "Recently I got to a point where I felt my art was actually good enough," he says. "I could not get any better

than I am today and I would be okay. At one point it just hit."

Heavily influenced by machinery, nature also plays a part in his imagination. Featured in Van Dyke's work, amidst the grimy cyborgs and pools of blood, is the occasional, relatively realistically represented koala, elephant, or giraffe. Then there's all the monkeys.

"I did an art show about eight years ago that had about ten pieces in it," he says, explaining his primate leitmotif. "One of the pieces was a chimp pointing a gun and flipping the bird called *Furious George*. Everyone loved it and as it turns out it was the only piece I sold in that show. I figured I was onto something."

In a twist suited to the post-apocalyptic, you-maniacs-you-blew-it-up vibe of his work, he has found himself, a psychiatrist's subject, intrigued by the psychiatry of the animals he draws.

"I was at the zoo in San Diego with a friend of mine," he says. "We were both in front of the gorilla compound and we were standing there separately drawing the silverbacks. At one point the gorilla ripped up a fistful of grass and threw it at my friend, Matt, who was drawing him. Moments later a clump of dirt and grass landed in my sketchbook. Matt and I weren't even standing next to each other when this happened but he threw dirt and grass at us in particular."

"In some way the gorilla realized that we were studying him and he wasn't too happy about that. They have a lot more going on in their heads than we know."

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