

Top row: Iron Man life-sized bust, X-Men lithograph.
Middle row: Universe X lithograph, Conan the Barbarian statue.
Bottom row: Bloodstorm bust, Avengers lithograph.
Right: Captain America life-sized bust.

Captain America



DYNAMIC FORCES, DYNAMITE AND ME

For some who will have picked up this book without knowing my full history, I'll be brief in recapping who I am.

I hail from Lubbock, Texas, and migrated to Chicago to attend the art school that my mother attended before me, the American Academy of Art. While I initially found work in storyboarding for advertising, I did pursue freelance work within comics that would eventually allow me to work full time within that field. I started with projects published by now-defunct comic book companies involving properties such as the Terminator and Miracleman. *Marvels*, a pitch that I started on for Marvel Comics when I was 20, took years to get in the right hands and was the breakout project that ultimately launched my career. This series' success helped secure the next project I pitched and am most known for, *Kingdom Come*. Both works provided an outsider's point of view toward the comic book heroes at key points in their history: For *Marvels*, it was a study of the birth of a superhero universe, and with *Kingdom Come*, it was at its end. The success of these works granted the projects' writers, Kurt Busiek (*Marvels*) and Mark Waid (*Kingdom Come*), and me the opportunity to have greater leverage to chart the course of our careers and be able to choose or provide the contents of what we wanted to work on. Over the years I've worked on graphic novel one-shots of some of the most famous superheroes, including Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, and full series featuring characters from the Justice League to Uncle Sam. Alongside these fully illustrated and painted works, I've helped design, create, and co-plot many other series that I'm usually identified as only the cover artist for, including *Astro City*, *Earth X* (and its sequels), *Battle of the Planets*, and *Justice Society of America*. It might go without saying, but my key niche in this art form is in the realistic painted style that I attempt. In the era of comic book art translating to other media with real-life approximation, I've tried to achieve that in print.

Now, how do I fit with Dynamite Entertainment? As part of their journey to becoming a full-fledged comic book publisher, we have business and friendship that goes back almost twenty years. Nick Barrucci, the proprietor and publisher of Dynamite, had just started his company Dynamic Forces when we met in 1993. His life, like mine, was always driven toward involvement in the comics medium, as a fan first and eventually through amassing and selling comic collections when he was a teenager. Nick worked diligently to make a place for himself in the business. Dynamic Forces' launch project was the Creator's Universe trading card series, using key artists in comics, each inventing and illustrating a new character for a trading card that they would own. In this period, the collectability of signed comics became a major commodity, and Nick reached out to me and virtually every writer and artist in the industry to participate. When prints and other merchandise began expanding in popularity, Dynamic Forces got the Marvel license for high-end lithographs and giclée prints. At the same time that I had a growing success with the Warner Bros. Studio Stores doing pieces of original art that would reach an expanded audience beyond comic book stores, Dynamic created works with me and other artists using Marvel characters to sell everywhere. One of Nick's greatest assets is knowing well how to sell and where to sell to people, using his connection to the shopping channels and reaching a whole new audience. Nick has very often been that face on television selling the various collectible books, prints, and other merchandise for comics and film properties. Nick is one of the most widely seen ambassadors for the comics field in the last couple of decades.

Along with original art that I've been fortunate to create for oversized prints, Dynamic was able to get a statue license from Marvel that allowed us to create a large host of some of the most ambitious sculpts that the comic book marketplace had ever seen. Working with some of the best statue sculptors, we created a series of life-sized busts including characters like Spider-Man, Dr. Doom, and Wolverine. This was the first of its kind in the business and the longest run yet, done at this scale. My future-set series for Marvel, *Earth X*, also spawned a great number of one-sixth scale busts that still towered over any standard size done in the field. All of these sculptures allowed me to participate in the design stage, sometimes even the sculpting stage, but mostly to simply enjoy seeing works like this finally happen.

When these opportunities came to an end, the choice of what to do next for Nick's company had him at a serious crossroads. Nick had often toyed with and fought against the idea of publishing comics for years. To do so now was a sizeable challenge, as comics publishing is not filled with a lot of certainty, but it is filled with a great deal of passion. If there is one thing Nick has for this field, it is passion. Before forming Dynamite, Nick had a formative influence over my series *Earth X* being picked up by Marvel Comics and my working with the *Battle of the Planets* property over at Top Cow Publishing. To start off on their own, Dynamite secured the rights of the *Army of Darkness* movie franchise and the fondly missed *Red Sonja* to bring into comics for the new century. Building slowly and constructively on each success, the company has grown to include many famous and spectacular new properties, pulling in every old ally like me to help in the process. With Dynamite, there is a serious attempt to compete in today's market. I've found a comfortable home working with them for some time now, and I'm grateful for the enormous respect they've shown me as well as the platform to be seen as part of ambitious project launches. I always endeavor to try and improve and prove myself to others, and it's nice to feel part of a place where you're side by side in that goal.

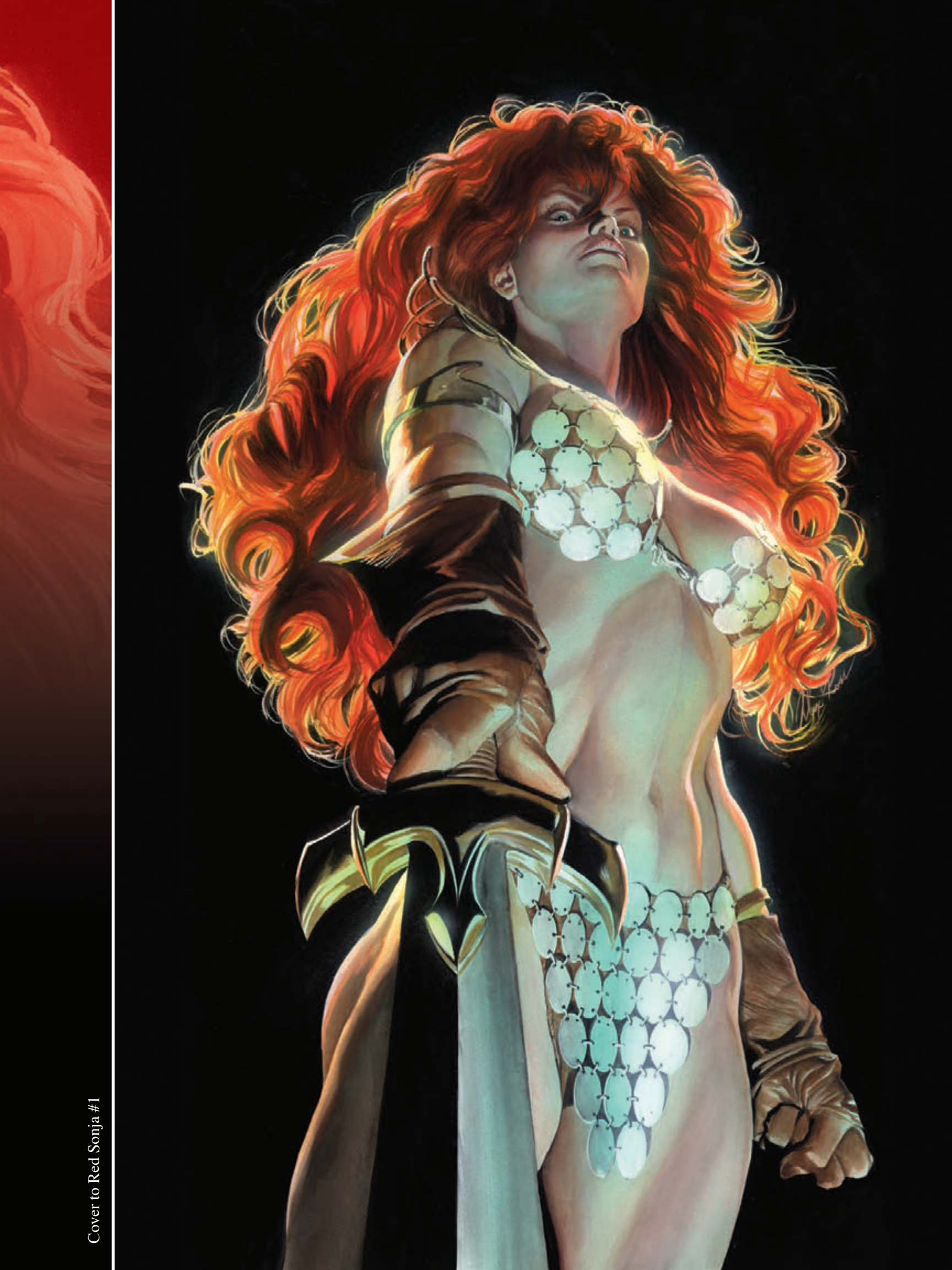
DYNAMITE

ENTERTAINMENT

With the advent of my friend's new comics publishing venture, I was honored to be a part of one of their first books, *Red Sonja*. In almost everything I've worked on in this business, I can tap into some nostalgia for a beloved icon from my youth or do some investigation into the characters and subject I'm working with to try and commune with its visual origins. With *Red Sonja*, I had hoped to translate Frank Thorne's depiction of her from the mid-'70s. With *Vampirella*, it was Frank Frazetta and his original '60s design of her. With *Buck Rogers*, I was asked to design a fresh look. Here I still followed patterns and shapes from the earliest costumes in the 1920s. Many of these characters grow and change over time to reflect contemporary influences and the changing hands that pass them down. I always like to believe that the key elements that make any design or concept work were there at the start, if you can just recognize it. In these pages you'll see a few of the projects I've contributed a little bit to that I was happy to be part of. With Dynamite's publishing of so many classic properties, including *Lone Ranger*, *Zorro*, *John Carter*, and many others, the opportunity to touch on so many characters that have affected me, beyond what I had attended to from the big two publishers, has been very stimulating.

Thumbnail cover sketches





Cover to Red Sonja #1

