



## SYNOPSIS

Arguably the most influential person in American comics, Will Eisner, as artist, businessman, innovator, and visual storyteller, enjoyed a career that encompassed comic books from their early beginnings in the 1930s to their development as graphic novels in the 1990s. During his sixty-year-plus career, Eisner introduced the now-traditional mode of comic book production; championed mature, sophisticated storytelling; was an early advocate for using the medium as a tool for education; pioneered the now-popular 'graphic novel,' and served as an inspiration for generations of artists, from cartoonist/playwright Jules Feiffer in the '40s to underground comix artist Art Spiegelman in the '60s to creators working and thriving in the field today. Without a doubt, Will Eisner was the godfather of the American comic book.

*Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist* is also the story of one man's struggle against a culture often unwilling to see behind the paneled world of POW!, ZAP! and CRASH! , a man who devoted his entire career to taking a so-called child's medium and infusing it with a unique vision of something so much more. Utilizing groundbreaking storytelling techniques, Will revolutionized the archetypical comic-book format into a new medium, the graphic novel, which today reaches a more mature, arguably more literary, audience. To Eisner, the form was limitless, bursting with a potential stretching far beyond super-heroes and villains, reaching into the depths of artistic expression, where both artist and writer, working hand-in-hand, can touch the very heart and soul of any reader.



Lloyd Greif presents  
A Montilla Pictures Production  
In Association with Comic Book Artist magazine and Schackman Films

**CAST & CREW**

Directed By Andrew D. Cooke  
Produced By Andrew D. Cooke & Jon B. Cooke  
Executive Producer & Editor: Kris Schackman  
Written by Jon B. Cooke  
Co-Producers: Ben Tudhope & James D. Lee  
Camera: Ben Tudhope, Kris Schackman, Joaquin Diego Prange  
Sound Recording: Alex P. Sullivan, Kris Schackman  
Associate Producer: Ria Finazzo  
Music composed & performed by Big Al & the Bop City Band  
Al Schackman - Guitar  
Bob Dorough - Piano / Organ  
Bradford Hayes - Alto & Soprano Sax  
Lisle Atkinson - Bass  
Adam Deitch - Drums

**CAST (as themselves, in alphabetical order):**

Neal Adams	Frank Miller
Brian Azzarello	Eduardo Risso
Kyle Baker	Trina Robbins
Peter Bagge	Jerry Robinson
Michael Chabon	Art Spiegelman
Max Allan Collins	Adrian Tomine
Will Eisner	Craig Thompson
Ann Eisner	Kurt Vonnegut
Jules Feiffer	
Michael T. Gilbert	
Gerard Jones	
Gil Kane	
Jack Kirby	
Denis Kitchen	
Joe Kubert	
Peter Kuper	
Harvey Kurtzman	
Stan Lee	
Scott McCloud	



## DIRECTOR'S BIO

Andrew D. Cooke is a writer and director living in New York City. Andrew has written two independent feature scripts, *Darwin* and *Stone Diaries*, for Producer G. Mac Brown (*The Departed*; *Unfaithful*) and has recently completed a screenplay with director Alex Sichel (*All Over Me*) which Dolly Hall (*The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*, *High Art*) will produce.

Andrew spent much of his early career in film production as a location manager, working on such films as *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, *Scent of a Woman*, *Flesh and Bone*, then later *Vanilla Sky* and *Catch Me If You Can*. Andrew also directed the short film, *My Perfect Journey* (executive produced by Hall), which received numerous film festival awards. *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist* is Andrew's first feature length documentary.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Since its inception in the mid-1930s, the comic book has been a bastard child of American culture. They were “funny books,” four-color pamphlets for boys and girls to skim at the corner drugstore and then stuff into pockets alongside slingshots, yo-yos, and jumping jacks. Comics were dismissed as kid’s stuff.

I grew up reading this “kid’s stuff,” my childhood was utterly consumed with these heroic adventures -- the twisting stories, over-the-top dramatic drawings. Soon, I began to create my own comics, studying the masters of the form, tracing their work, then co-opting it as my own. And in doing so, I began to understand the true artistry of what some of these creators were doing -- for many, it was just a job, but for a few, masters like Will Eisner, one could literally feel his work, as it leapt off the page, rattling and electrifying your brain.

So, when years later, my older brother Jon came to me with the idea of making a film about Eisner, all I had to do was harken back to those visceral feelings for my answer. And as I delved deeper into the subject, working with Jon and Editor/Executive Producer Kris Schackman, I began to understand how important it was for this story to be told, to express the artistic struggle of a man who set out at a very early age to change how the average person viewed what was widely perceived as a childish medium but which Eisner held so dear and believed held such promise. During the course of his career, spanning the life of the comic industry itself, Eisner fought the good fight, strove tirelessly to gain wide scale acceptance for the form. He saw the artistic potential of comics as a vibrant and authentic method of self-expression, not only to tell stories of heroics and far-flung fantasy to children, but to depict tales of real-life struggle and perseverance fit for a mature, erudite audience. Eisner glimpsed the graphic novel’s potential as literature 30 years before he created the form.

Our intention is for a mainstream audience to come to fully appreciate that comic books, though grown from its pop culture roots in the super-hero ghetto, are a valid and important form of expression (one that shares a distinction with only jazz and the banjo as being a uniquely American-born art form) with the best examples (Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan*, etc.) capable of infusing a reader with the same emotions and insights as any great novel or film. By following the development of the form’s most innovative practitioner — Will Eisner — we see the parallel emergence and maturing of sequential art.



“Will (Eisner) was writing for grown-ups. He was writing for me.”

■ Neil Gaiman

“Will Eisner essentially invented the graphic novel.”

■ Max Allan Collins

“What Eisner did which was so remarkable was to introduce genuine agony.”

■ Kurt Vonnegut

“He pointed out all the possibilities that comics had.”

■ Scott McCloud

“It set the standard for the rest of us. *A Contract with God* changed the course of mine and many other careers.”

■ Frank Miller

“His book... his work... has become larger than his life. It will be a classic. Everyone will drink from that fountain.”

■ Eduardo Risso



## PRODUCTION NOTES

- A feature film of Will's most enduring character, *The Spirit*, went into production on October 8th, written and directed by Frank Miller, creator and co-director of *Sin City*, and creator of *300*. Odd Lot's Gigi Pritzker and Deborah Del Prete are producing, along with Batfilm's Michael Uslan, who is an exec producer of the upcoming *The Dark Knight*. The film stars Gabriel Macht, Samuel L. Jackson, Scarlett Johansson and Eva Mendes. Lionsgate will distribute for a January 2009 release.
- The main character in Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* was based in large part of Will Eisner. Scott Rudin (*The Hours*, *Wonder Boys*) will produce a feature film based on the book.
- The Oscars of the comic industry are called the *Eisners*.
- Will Eisner passed away on January 3, 2005, during the making of this documentary. He was 87-years old. His final work, *The Plot*, was published three months after his passing to worldwide acclaim.
- Find more information and view the trailer at:

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