Written by Chris Alexander
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Niche imprint Radical Comics just keeps pumping out the four-color gold, steadily dropping jaws with titles like HOTWIRE: REQUIEM FOR THE DEAD, the devastating FVZA: FEDERAL VAMPIRE AND ZOMBIE AGENCY and Nick Percival’s arresting dark fantasy LEGENDS: THE ENCHANTED. LEGENDS, both written and illustrated by the talented Percival (pictured), takes place in a dark, richly evocative land of monsters and myth, where creatures of literate fantasy exist as immortal demigods. When Pinocchio—yes, Pinocchio—is found murdered, the narrative morphs from violent fantasy to grim neo-noir.

The title seems a natural fit to be acquired for the cinema—and earlier this year, that’s exactly what happened when juggernaut filmmaker Ron Howard announced his plans to turn the title into a feature film. In the meantime, the LEGENDS series is available in graphic-novel form for legions of new fans to enjoy. Fango spoke with Percival about his work and the wild world he forged for LEGENDS: THE ENCHANTED.

FANGORIA: The book is a blast of pure imagination—almost intimidating in its scope. Did it evolve organically? Had you deliberated on the concept long before putting pen to page?

NICK PERCIVAL: I’ve wanted to mess around in the world of fairy tales for a long time, but give those classic stories a good kick in the balls and shake them up with a dark, dangerous twist. A lot of my old sketchbooks are filled with bizarre takes on these well-known folklore characters, so it was definitely something I was gonna tackle at some point in my career.

For LEGENDS, I spent quite a few years developing the concept on and off with a ton of character design paintings, environmental stuff, weapon designs, vehicles, etc. I wanted to try and create a “complete” world that felt unique, but also looked like everything in it belonged there. So all the cast, creatures and even the everyday normal folks have a visual consistency that makes sense.

I was pretty disciplined in the writing stages, and locked down a full script before actually starting on the interior painted pages. It’s always tempting to jump to all the cool stuff you want to paint, but I ended up creating the whole graphic novel in order, which was a first for me.

FANG: Speaking of pen to page, which came first: the words or the images?

PERCIVAL: In the early stages, it was both. I would be fooling around with character designs during the day, doing many different versions of the main cast, and then in the evenings, I’d be fleshing out the script, even giving the characters their own minibiographies and lots of background info.

FANG: Eyes. One thing about your realization of characters is their eyes—they pop from the darkness, and when they’re in frame, it’s almost alarming. Can you comment?

PERCIVAL: I’m a big fan of a high-contrast look and feel—lots of dark, heavy shadows, things fading into black, bold colors and so on. It’s a good way of controlling where the viewer should be focusing their attention and helps give the characters definition where it’s needed. Certainly where the creatures are concerned, I’ve deliberately focused on core areas that I want the reader to look at, and then blended the rest of the images into the darkness surrounding them. It’s good for mood and tone, and to be honest, the world that LEGENDS is set in is a pretty bleak place.

FANG: Congratulations on the film deal. With so many comic-book properties being adapted for the screen, do you think most writers now create with cinema in mind?

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