

## Q&A: Scott Snyder on "SWAMP THING"

Written by Jorge Solis  
Friday, 06 April 2012 09:03

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Fresh from the muck and onto newsstands, **SWAMP THING #8** follows Dr. Alec Holland as he witnesses the plant elemental monster at its most terrifying and despite his best efforts, Alec can no longer run away from his green demon. At his darkest hour, he must face a greater evil and accept his true destiny. Series author Scott Snyder spoke to FANGORIA about taking the **SWAMP THING** title in a new and fresh direction, working with artist Yanick Paquette, and helming his latest horror comic, **SEVERED**.

**FANGORIA:** How did you become involved with this project?

**SCOTT SNYDER:** Swamp Thing, for me, is a character that I've been thinking about, talking about at DC/Vertigo since I started. I've been talking to Karen Berger about the possibility of bringing the character back. I asked if they were doing anything. Swamp Thing and Batman are my favorite two characters of all time. What happened was, about six or seven months ago, Geoff Johns called me up and told me they were bringing him back in **BRIGHTEST DAY**. He heard I was a big fan of the character, and [asked] was I interested in doing it if they liked my idea? So I said, "Of course!" I told him my idea, which involved bringing Alec Holland back as human, and dealing with the mantle of being Swamp Thing. And learn more why he was the one chosen to be Swamp Thing; why is his destiny tied to this kind of monster? Geoff really liked it and said it would really track well with what he was doing in **BRIGHTEST DAY**. We set it up and I've been working on it since then. I'm very excited!



**FANGORIA:** **SWAMP THING** was created by Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson in 1971. In the early 1980s, author Alan Moore (of **WATCHMEN** fame) was given free reign to revamp **SWAMP THING**. How did you want this reinvention, during DC Comics' **THE NEW 52**, to be different?

**SNYDER:** They gave me free reign. It's pretty radically different. At the same time, I've read

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every SWAMP THING book, from Len Wein all the way through to Josh Dysart stuff. I'm a huge, huge fan obviously of what Alan Moore did to the character. At the core of the character, for me personally, he is a man wrestling with monsters, both internally and externally. He is a man who is covered in plant vegetation and back from the dead, in the Len Wein incarnation. He's longing to be human again somehow. In Moore's version, he is a vegetable copy of a man who realizes he never was human. He feels lost in the world. There's always that sense of sadness that he's somehow wrestling with the notion that he's both monster and man. Fighting monsters is an extension of that inner struggle. What I really wanted to do was build on the wonderful mythology/history of the character and not change anything. That's the same departure point we took to BATMAN. There really isn't anything different. All the mythology/history stands as it was. But we really wanted to take stuff in a fun direction here. So for me, it really meant doing something that wouldn't be seen as Alan Moore-lite.

I was just thinking how strange it is there really hasn't been any story about Alec Holland as a person. He never really appears in the flesh, except for a few pages. We really don't know who he is or who he was before Swamp Thing. In that way, I really wanted to build on what's already there and explore uncharted territory. I thought there's a great story about why the Green chose him to be Swamp Thing. Is there an enemy that we haven't seen Swamp Thing fight, something he was designed to fight against? That's really what the core of the series is about and the direction we wanted to take.

**FANG:** Will long-time followers see their favorite characters, such as Matthew Cable, Swamp Thing's daughter, Tefé, and even John Constantine?

**SNYDER:** Definitely! We have plans for a lot of the Swamp Thing cast. Not everyone is going to be there right away. Don't expect to see Matthew or Tefé right off the bat. But, they're all part of the mythology and we're really working hard to build on that mythology. You will see some of them quickly in the series. You might see some other ones in surprising ways.

**FANG:** SWAMP THING is known for its combination of environment, plant life, and monsters. How did you and artist Yanick Paquette envision Swamp Thing's world?

**SNYDER:** Well, what Yanick really wanted to do, when you see these issues, was bring in more than his A-game. He wanted to be incredibly bold and daring in the art, because he is a big fan of what other artists on the book have done, such as Steve Bissette and Bernie Wrightson. He really wanted to make it look different and appropriate for what the story is

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about. From cover to the last page, he's experimenting with things. It's huge fun! It's hugely successful, in my mind, looking at it. He divided panels by uneven breaks, that almost look like branches, leaves, and veins. It really is meant to be a marriage of form and content, the way the best SWAMP THING comics are. He really has free rein. The environment, the kind of creepiness of the Green, and the opposing force of the enemy, are really there on every page.

**FANG:** What can readers expect from further issues of SWAMP THING?

**SNYDER:** Well, we really wanted to be a big, epic story. This is the story I would tell if I got my one chance to ever write SWAMP THING. It's not little stories, not little adventures of Swamp Thing fighting with other superheroes. It's a big Swamp Thing story that really has to do with the nature of his character. It's this epic battle that has to deal with the fate of the planet. At its core, it's really about a man struggling with his own destiny, and the possibility he has to give up everything he loves, in order to be the hero he's supposed to be. Without giving too much away, you're going to see creatures made of slaughterhouse pieces; you'll see ancient Swamp Things through different generations; you'll see characters that you know and love, and characters we're introducing. You'll see deserts blooming, forests burning and rotting! It's going to be big and epic!



**FANG:** SEVERED and AMERICAN VAMPIRE share similarities, as they both take place as America is growing up and inventing itself. Tell me about your interests in early American history with these titles?

**SNYDER:** That's a really, really great question! I mean that's the theme of both series in a lot of ways. That's the fascination on my part, on SEVERED's part, and on my friend's part, Scott Tuft, with certain moments in American history.

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With *AMERICAN VAMPIRE*, it was really filtered around this notion that vampires are part of our popular culture now, but at the same time, they've had this foreign, exotic feel. They've had this sleek, modern cool otherness to them, as if we're meant to be attracted to them because they wear black leather, sunglasses, and go to clubs. They look like they came out of *THE MATRIX*. My favorite vampire stories are the ones homegrown, *SALEM'S LOT*, *NEAR DARK*, and *THE LOST BOYS*. They have an excitedly American feel. To me, the scariest thing about vampires, the thing that makes them enduring, is that they're essentially people you know and love, who have come back from the grave to turn you into them. They have all this knowledge of you, from being your friend, mother, or your brother, and using it against you, because they're an evil version of themselves. So in that way, that's really what we—me, Rafael Albuquerque, and Mark Doyle—wanted to do; make a new kind of homegrown vampire! That's really the core of it, to try and create a vampire that speaks to American iconography. It's not just about Skinner Sweet being born here, but the characters have become vampires as part of our imagination of American folk - cowboys and gangsters. We try to make them very real, detailed flesh and blood characters. We also try to build them out of certain icons from the American landscape.

Scott Tuft and I have been friends since we met in high school. He's in film. This is a fun thing to collaborate on here. With *SEVERED*, it came from our fascination with this moment in American history, around 1916, where at home things are very optimistic. There are these new inventions changing life very quickly, from the automobiles, the railroad being built, electric lights. There's this sense of optimism while this war is happening overseas. There's this kind of feeling of both optimism and dread. We really wanted to tell a story that had both those things. For us, the story centers on a boy who runs away from home to find his father, who's a traveling minstrel, a black-face performer. The other character, who is the twisted heart of the series, is a traveling salesman, who is a demon on the road. He carries a suitcase, travels the rails and roads. He's this older guy with this really nice smile. How is he such a good salesman when he's such a nice guy? He says, "Behind my pearly whites, I've got razor sharp teeth." You laugh it off like he's joking. You turn your back, he takes out his teeth, and eats you. It's a series we've been thinking about for a very long time. I'm very proud of it and happy to do it. It's a different kind of book. It's a slow-burn. It's not as high octane and fast as *AMERICAN VAMPIRE*. It's a slower, creepier psychological fear that builds over time. I like them both equally in terms of that kind of horror in books and movies. I like *THE SHINING*, which has that slow-build. Most stories have bigger scares earlier. It's just a different kind of method and it's something I was really excited to experiment with. It's a fun collaboration because it's a little bit of both of us in it.

**FANG:** *AMERICAN VAMPIRE* won the Will Eisner Award for Best New Series. Does winning have an affect or pressure on the writing now?

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**SNYDER:** Well, no, only just because we just have so much fun on the book. People say that but it's really true. I talk to Rafael all the time, on Skype, AOL and Facebook chat. We just do our own thing. People just like it and gave us an award for it. It's not so much intimidating. It's exciting about wanting a valediction for putting in crazy ideas in the series already, and it makes us want to go even bigger, in terms of the ideas, the storylines, the action, and the art. It's about giving people even more on what's already there, in big fun ways. We're just getting started on it.

**FANG:** What are you working on now?

**SNYDER:** SEVERED is finished and will be out in trade paperback on April 11th. My three big books right now are BATMAN, which I'm obviously super excited about, SWAMP THING, which I'm equally excited about, and AMERICAN VAMPIRE, which is my baby. One of the collaborators I'm working with, Rafael, is just knocking it out of the park! Greg Capullo on BATMAN is just amazing! Same thing about SWAMP THING. Yanick is just slaying it! I couldn't be happier right now. I can't wait to see what people think of all these books. I hope you check them out. Let me know what you think. I really want to know.

**FANG:** How can readers find out more about your work?

**SNYDER:** I'm really easy to find. I'm on Facebook and Twitter, @Snyder1835. That's Elvis' birthday. I'm a big Elvis fan. You can look me up on any social networking sites like that. My books are available on ComiXology and also in comic stores. The trades of AMERICAN VAMPIRE are available in book stores. My BATMAN work is out there too. I can't wait to hear what people think about these books. I couldn't be prouder of what's out now and beyond.