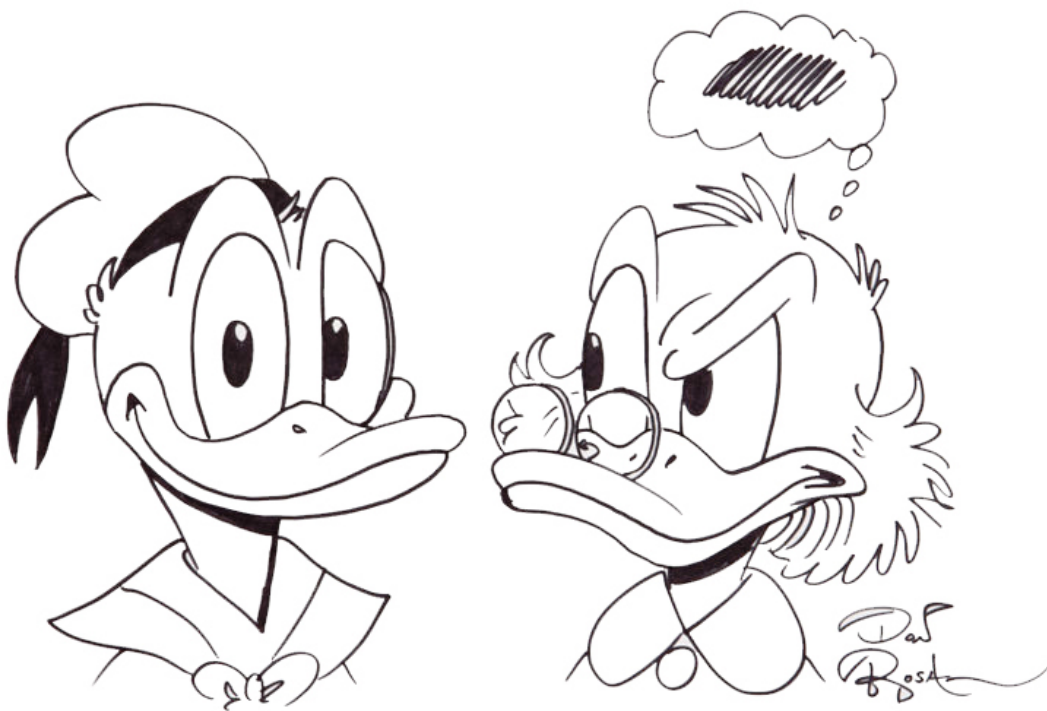


Laura Glötter

## **„What I do, it's not art, it's entertainment“: Ein Gespräch mit Don Rosa**



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## “What I do, it’s not art, it’s entertainment”: Ein Gespräch mit Don Rosa

*Für sein Comic „The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck“ erhielt er 1995 den Eisner Award für „Best Serialized Story“ und damit eine der bedeutendsten amerikanischen Auszeichnungen der Comic-Branche.*

*Keno Don Hugo Rosa, der nie ein Kunststudium absolvierte und das Zeichnen autodidaktisch erlernte, wuchs dank seiner Schwester, die ein großer Fan damaliger Comics war, mit den heute noch berühmten Carl-Barks-Geschichten auf. Es waren Geschichten, die von Scrooge McDuck, seinem Neffen Donald, und den Großneffen Huey, Dewey und Louie erzählten. Fasziniert und als großer Fan der Charaktere, begann er, mit ihnen als Protagonisten, selbst Geschichten zu erzählen und zu illustrieren. Er entschied sich dagegen, das Familienunternehmen, eine Baufirma in der dritten Generation, zu führen, schlug stattdessen den Weg eines Comic-Autors und Zeichners ein und trat in Barks’ Fußstapfen. Doch schon dieser hatte seine Schwierigkeiten mit dem Großkonzern und der Massenmaschinerie Disney und so stieß auch Rosa immer wieder an seine Grenzen. Nach über zwanzig Jahren schloss er mit Disney und dem Produzieren neuer Comics ab. Heute lebt er als zufriedener Comic- und Film-Kenner mit einer Chili-Plantage in Kentucky und ist glücklich, wenn er auf Signier-Touren seinen Fans weltweit mit Zeichnungen und Unterschriften eine Freude bereitet.*

*Was bleibt, ist ein fahler Beigeschmack über seine Arbeit bei Disney und den dortigen Umgang.*

*Im Oktober 2018 besuchte Don Rosa Deutschland im Zuge seiner Europa-Tour für einige Tage. Dabei hatte ich die Möglichkeit ihn in Stuttgart zu treffen und mich mit ihm zu unterhalten.*

### First off, a few art relevant questions: Who’s your favorite artist?

Classical art? Not comic art you’re talking about. Well, I like illustration art, like the old magazine book illustrations from the late 1800s or early 1900s. Cover artists like J. C. Leyendecker or Norman Rockwell. But as far as classical art – even though I went to civil engineering college, I did take one elective art course. I know I was always fascinated by all the Dutch Masters. They’re so precise. Like photographic art. I certainly appreciate that more than abstract art, that’s sort of a hoax.



Don Rosa

**Do you have a favorite artwork, like – one famous example – the Mona Lisa?**

Well, it wouldn't be the Mona Lisa. I remember seeing that while I was in the Louvre, and I was like "Where is it? Where is it? It's not gonna be that little thing" (*laughs*). Okay, you're asking me these highly elaborated questions. Let me think about that one ... I do remember. We were talking about the Dutch Masters, I believe it was a Dutch Master. After all it's been 45 years since I have taken that course. But I remember there was one that a guy painted, an oval mirror. Distortion mirror and it was like you were looking into the mirror and you'd see figures in the background.<sup>1</sup> That was pretty amazing.

**Now we're getting into the comics: In the process of making a comic what element of work gives you the most personal satisfaction?**

There's only one thing that I get satisfaction from, that's finishing it, 'cause I know that writing it was easy. That was kind of fun, 'cause I'm entertaining. The whole process was self-entertainment, 'cause you don't always had that. I never intended that, doing it for a living. I knew I was always gonna run the family construction company, but I always told comic book stories. Writing and drawing them initially just to amuse myself. And then finally, when I found out that I can have an audience of maybe four or five people, I'd do it in High School. Then I found out "Oh, I can have an audience of a couple of thousand people", and then I did it in College, you know comic strips. But I'm mostly entertaining myself.

So, when I wrote a Duck story later on, I know the writing was sort of entertaining. Like finding out and doing research, like the Kalevala story for instance, I found out interesting facts. I gathered, oh, easily ten times more information than I'd ever use. So that was fun doing all that research. That was entertaining, but then when I finished that, then would come the drawing. In between there is the laying out of what I've written, that was kinda fascinating in the sense that in my stories is so much going on. Probably too much. Figuring out how many, I usually know how many pages I'd have, and then know that all the ideas I had were not gonna fit in that number of pages. Every single panel was necessary. Every single one to tell the story in that short space. It was literally like a jigsaw puzzle. Like, I know I'm gonna need this sequence to be at least five panels and this sequence maybe has to be two panels and this sequence is ten panels and I got to fit them all together on the pages, and they have to fit onto each page. You know, I can't have a sequence that the last panel of the sequence is the top panel on the next page, it has to end with the bottom. Things like that.

I don't really think about consciously, but I know in my head how comic books are supposed to read, the same way I know how movies are supposed to be, so

<sup>1</sup> Jan van Eyck, Arnolfini Hochzeit, London, National Gallery, 82 x 60 cm, 1434.



Don Rosa

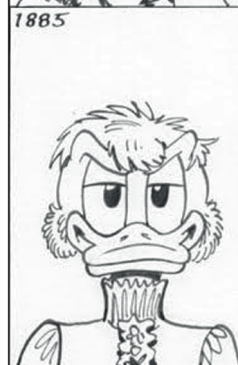


they had the right pacing and everything. Well, probably film movies like in the 60s.

So that was kind of interesting too, it'd be frustrating, but it'd be interesting, 'cause eventually I'd get it fixed. But the part I didn't like was drawing, 'cause that was just tedious and I don't think I did it very well. It's really hard. I've never been trained at it, but, well, it's detailed.

So that would be the only satisfaction I'd get out of this: finishing it. Maybe seeing it published, I guess, that was the main satisfaction. To see that now other people can see it. But then the frustration would be that these publishers of these particular kind of comics are not like publishers of other kind of comics. The publishers, the so called Disney Comics, even though Disney really had nothing to do with it. They didn't even create the characters, you know Carl Barks did that. These publishers were not really concerned with the presentation of the story. They're just slapping it on as fast as they can 'cause they perceive that the readers were all five years old. But of course I knew the readers, at least the people who liked my stories were not the five-years-olds, they were the older and the adult readers. And I knew, just like me, they expect the story to be presented in a way that had respect for the story and respect for the people who created the story, whether it was me or somebody else. And I would then have to suffer through seeing these, my stories, slapped down on the pages with the wrong colors and the wrong lettering and sometimes the wrong art. Like uncontinued stories. I'd always do each story, they'd be two or three parts, so I would construct a story so that these usually eight-page-chapters...I would do for the ninth page a version of it which would have a top half of the page which would be a recap of the previous eight pages. That's what they would use for a continued or serialized story and then I'd do a different half page which had an extra joke or an extra action scene or something, that would fit right into the story and that would be what they would use if they were gonna do it all in one issue. But I would constantly see them, even if they did it all in one issue, they'd do the three-chapter version. And it wouldn't say it was chapter two, it would just all of a sudden be a half page panel with the recap.

Things like that were just really frustrating. When I looked at pictures of myself over the last twenty or twenty-five years, I noticed for the first, say, five or ten years that I was doing these comics, I still had a full head of red hair. But sometime around the year 2000, I see the photos like in a space of two years, all my hair fell out and turned white and I think that's what it was. Such constant frustration of putting so much work into this stuff and seeing it so poorly presented. But that changed about ten years ago, so now I've got control over it. So now the frustration is all in the past and now it's better (*smiles*).



Don Rosa

## How did you get control?

I trademarked my name (*smiles bigger*). So if they wanna put my name on my work they have to do it right. One good example of that is The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck. They published it three or four times here in Germany. They probably did it in 1997 and I think they did it again maybe around 2005, or so, but then in that time they just used the Italian version. They just kind of saved time. They got the Italian coloring and some of the lettering and it's not the right coloring and the dialogue is not right. But it's easy, it's cheap for them. They just copy it, they've got a right to.

They have a license, they don't have to pay the Italians anything, they just pay Disney. So then ten years ago they wanted to do it again. They said we're gonna reprint The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck again and I said "Are you gonna use the same one you did last time?", and they said "Yes": "No, you're not! You gonna use the" – I think there was a Finnish version that had come out, that I had control over. And I said "This is the one you gonna use" And I don't know, but I bet that really burned them. They've never been told what to do by an artist or writer. They've always been able to treat the stuff like it was their own creation and just do it anyway they want it. I just imagined that. But they didn't have any choice and I also had a fellow to proof-read it. He's a German friend who speaks English very well. He was just a fan at the time, and he told them how to change the dialogue. And that just burned them – I'm just guessing, if Germans were like we see them in the old American movies, you know. They're an authority, there's just a private who's telling the German, you know the General, what to do, he would (*makes funny noises and laughs*). That probably infuriated them. They didn't have any choice if they wanted it, of course they can use my stories anyway they want if they don't put my name on it – then I don't care. But if they put my name on it, I want fans to finally know that this is the way it's supposed to be. This is the way it was always intended to be and not the way you saw it before. I was signing some stories just this morning for a local fan and some of them were the nicer editions, but some of them were the old reprints. And I opened it up and I thought about how bad these were. So I signed it and then I circled some stuff on the pages and was like "No! This is not the way this is supposed to be", 'cause I can't stand it. But that's years ago and the weeklies are for the kids, that's okay.

So that's what I did, I trademarked my name and I thought it was pretty clever (*laughs*).



Don Rosa



**What is your least favorite part of work? You already said it, but I'm kinda surprised 'cause your drawings are really good.**

Yeah it's drawing, I said it. I don't like to draw, but it's necessary to tell a story. It's labor, physical labor. And, plus, I don't think I do it well. You like it 'cause it's got all the details and that is good. But that means, for instance, when I go on these promotional tours for the publisher and I know when you go like an author or an actor or a cartoonist on a promotional tour you're supposed to – I've seen them on TV or talk shows – you know to be like “Here's my new book, it's sensational, it's great, it's the best thing I've ever done, you've got to see it!!” – I can't do that. I don't like self-promotion, I don't know why. When I go on promotional tour, so called, I just say “Well, I just completed this story, it's about this and this and Scrooge and that and I hope it's okay.”

**I'm still surprised because your drawing is so fine, so many people like it.**

Well, art directors don't like it 'cause they know this is not professional artwork. You hear me say it's not professional artwork and I don't think it is – I mean, I'm a comic fan, so I know good artwork from bad artwork. I know good artwork, like Frank Frazetta and I could name so many. But sometimes people, the editors or somebody else, say “You're too modest, why are you not proud of your work” and I say “If they ask me the right question, they'd find out I'm not so modest.” And they say “Is that so? Do you like your writing?”, then I say “Well, it's maybe a little complicated for the younger readers and maybe I get carried away with the facts – too many facts”. “And what about your artwork?” “It's stiff and it got way too many details, needles and irritating details.” “Don't you think your stories are entertaining?” “Oh, you're damn right, they're entertaining, yeah!” I don't think they're pretty, but they're much more entertaining than any of those other stories 'cause that's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to entertain the reader, I'm not trying to please the art director, I'm not trying to get the job done quickly, so I'm getting paid more. I'm a fan, so I'm trying to put as much detail in there, background detail and private jokes, 'cause all I'm trying to do is to entertain another fan like myself. So I know damn well they're entertaining, I mean the other Duck stories have an average of about seven panels per page. You know there is four tiers, three tiers of two panels and usually one panel all over across. And I try to figure out how many panels I put on each page and I think it's more like eleven, 'cause I'm just like to cram in as much as I can. I know it's gonna look crowded, it's gonna look overbusy, it's not gonna look appealing to the eye.

I heard cartoonists and artists saying “This page here, it's posted directly here and the flow goes” and so on. No, I'm just trying to cram as much in as I can and I don't think it's artistic. What I do, it's not art, it's entertainment, but I think that's a high ambition, just as great art. My comics are not great art, but I do



Don Rosa

hope they're great entertainment, that's all I'm trying to do. To do something that's really entertaining. So yeah, I think my comics are very entertaining, when people say "Oh your art is stiff and has too many details" then I say "Yeah, so it is". You know, if you don't like it, don't read it, I'm okay with that (*laughs*).

### Has any of your finished work surprised you?

Well, when I finished a story, when I've been working on it for three months and doing nothing else but that one story for three months, and it takes you, an average reader, like 10 or 15 minutes to read it. After that I'm so sick and tired of it and I'm sure the whole thing is a dreadful mistake and nobody is gonna like it but after a few years I'd reread it and think "Oh, this wasn't so bad after all! This was a nice story. I'm proud of that one" (*smiles*) So, I'm surprised when the stories are not the dreadful mistakes I thought they were.

### So, which of your stories are you most proud of and why?

When I do a sequel to a Barks story. I'm really proud of that, 'cause that means something to me personally, related my own childhood, and that was an incredible thrill. But if you mean the stories of my own that I liked, that's a difference. I guess I'm proud that I was able to do a sequel to a Barks story, but then a story that I may have really enjoyed – I never can pick out a single one. You know, it's like apples and oranges, they're different stories that I like for different reasons. But all my favorite stories, they happen to have one thing in common: they all had something to do with Glittering Goldie (*smiles*).<sup>2</sup> All the stories I like, the Klondike stories and also those in the present day. I always liked those. If I had been able or felt like I wanted to continue doing stories, one thing that would have convinced me or maybe make me think twice about quitting is if they said that I could do nothing from then on, all they needed for me to do are stories about Scrooge in the Klondike or Scrooge and Teddy Roosevelt. All of my stories are taking place in the 50s, but if I could do stories only about Scrooge throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century, that would be fun. That would really appeal to my love for historical fiction. And even humor historical fiction. There're a lot of writers of historical fiction and novels, but only a few writers do like comedy historical fiction. And that's what I would do: comical comic historical fiction of my favorite comic character and my favorite president having adventures around the world and also in the

<sup>2</sup> Glittering Goldie ist eine von dem Comic-Zeichner und Autor Carl Barks geschaffene Figur, die in der 1953 veröffentlichten Geschichte *Back to the Klondike* zum ersten Mal dem Publikum präsentiert wurde. In den Comics stellt sie stets Scrooge alte Liebe aus Goldgräber-Zeit und seiner damit einhergehenden Verbindung zum Klondike dar.



Don Rosa



Klondike. And Goldie would maybe be the third part of that. But I stopped, so I will not be doing that.

### **There's no option going back to that?**

No. Not in that system. I already said one of those aspects, it's so frustrating. Publishers are so careless with something that meant so much to me. It wasn't just a job, I mean, I could have stayed in the family construction company and just make money. I had the company and I was the boss, that was easy. But I quit that and to do something I loved. The love of doing it was so profound and to see publishers, and I'm not just referring to the German publishers alone (*laughs*), but publishers all over the world were just dashing the stuff off. And, you know, they had no reason to give much respect to the work they did. So I had to force them to give respect.

People ask me what would have to happen that I would lose my compulsion to tell stories, 'cause all through my childhood it was compulsion, I just have to tell myself, even if nobody else was seeing them, I told myself comic book stories, just for the fun of writing and drawing a comic book story. And all through high school and college I'd spent weekends just drawing comic strips, for people to read and it was fun. And even when I was running the construction company in the evenings, I'd write and draw comic strips for fan magazines, you know, comic book collector magazines, for free. And then I'd be able to do it for a living and get payed. But in that system – it totally destroyed my enthusiasm. I guess I should be glad because I quit 2007, that's twelve years ago. Stone cold quit.

And I don't miss it a bit, I don't wanna ever go back and doing that again. I'll never get tired of traveling around and visiting comic fans and doing sketches and so on, I'll never get tired of that, 'cause I'm still a comic fan.

Oh, and that's the only time – there are some Facebook pages and fan forums – and like I said I don't like any kind of self-promotion and I don't get involved in discussions, but if I ever see them having a discussion saying "Oh, Don Rosa will be back some day. He will eventually go do a story about this and that" then I put in and say "No! Stop thinking about that! You only gonna be disappointed, I absolutely am not gonna go back creating stories in this system. And they say "Well, you could do stories for somebody else to draw!" No, I'd still be doing the story, I'd still be contributing to that system. And that artist would be exploited. So I'll never go back to creating stories, 'cause I'm a fan. There are so many things in my own collection that I want to read. I spent all that time reading all my old comics over again or watching my old movies.



Don Rosa



### What about new comics?

The new comics? I haven't seen them. I have no idea what's going on in comics. I haven't watched network television since the late 70s. Partly it's because I've just learned that I can't watch commercial television. I can't sit through TV commercials. Occasionally somebody says "There's a new TV series on, that you should watch", so I rent the DVDs and sometimes I like it a lot. But it's the style of entertainment now. I'm just too old-fashioned to enjoy for example Marvel movies.

They're less interested in the plot, in the characterization, it's too much about the action. And I like old action movies, but the new action movies – they treat the action as the most important part, instead of just the least important. These movies now I don't enjoy except when they cut out the action scenes, that would have been a good movie. I assume, that younger movie watchers like all this action. When I'm watching all sort of these movies, I rent them and watch them at home on a big television, I don't see them in a theater, but when the action scene starts I'm like "Alright, come on get it over with, let's get back to the story. This has nothing to do with the story."

### So, which series did you enjoy?

Well, imagine that, it's already ten years ago. I'm a big TV buff, talking about people who are too hooked on television now. Back in the 60s I even contributed to books on the history of television. I mean, I was such a TV fan and I personally collected like 16 hours of TV themes on tape cassettes. Every year I would record the opening theme songs of every television show, just because I loved television so much. Just like I love comic books. I like the bad ones and the good ones (*smiles*). I just like to collect. Like my comic book collection, I collect everything. I collect comics I hate, but they're comics. They're comics from a certain period or time and an example of that period. So I collect comics I love and I collect comics I don't like. So I collected TV themes of shows I liked and the TV themes of the shows that I never watched or didn't like. I wouldn't watch them, but I still loved the theme. I was a huge TV buff, bigger than any TV buff now. But in those days we had three channels, not 500, that's an amazing thing. But I know that the new TV shows can never be like the Wild Wild West, or The Prisoner, or The Avengers, or so many others.

But you asked for one particular one. That one that comes to mind was – some Finnish friend said "Have you seen this new show called Firefly?" and I said "Well, I haven't seen any shows" and he was like "Oh you have to watch that" so I rented it and I liked it. I think it's one of my ten favorite TV shows ever. I don't know shows in more recent years, people are saying "You should watch this show –", I don't know, something like Breaking Bad, or The Walking Dead. And I like zombie movies, but they're not zombies. It puzzles me how the word



Don Rosa

“zombie” got mixed up from what a zombie is – you know a dead person who gets up and eats people, that’s a modern zombie. Bombie the Zombie,<sup>3</sup> he’s a classic zombie. He’s either a corpse or a mesmerized human being who just is the slave of another master, he don’t eat anybody. I enjoy some other shows that I rented, but I just have to fast forward through it, ’cause there’s so much deadwood in there. Oh that’s another show: Deadwood. It’s already been some years ago. That was a nice show. What’s your favorite? What are some good TV shows that you like? Americans of course, we don’t get anything else (*laughs*).

**Oh mine? It’s a British one, I really like it.**

British I know. That’s the best! British movies and TV shows. The best! Like The Prisoner, The Avengers, these are all the best.

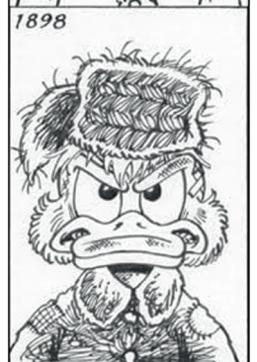
**Yes! I really like the BBC Sherlock series, the early seasons.**

Yeah of course! That was good! I think towards the end, they got too comic booky, too weird. But I loved the characterization and I loved the film technique. That was fascinating. But things now are more like, you know, comic books. There are movies that are just too comic booky. But I guess the modern audience is used to that, so they don’t think of it the same way. This is not an adult plot, this is like a plot from a comic book. And I don’t mind seeing comic book plots in comic books, but you put it on a movie or a TV show ... But that one, yeah, I liked it, what else?

**I really like Gotham, the one with all the Batman villains and origin stories. It’s not always that good, but I like the idea of it.**

Yeah. I’ve seen that on airplanes and watched that a few times. But I can hardly think of any new movies. What literally makes me sick to my stomach is now movies can do literally anything. Now they can show anything they want in a movie. They could film historical epics and show scenes from actual history with thousands of warriors and ancient cities and things. But what are they doing with this technology? Now they make comic book movies. And some of them I like, but they should do something else with that technology and not comic book stories. I don’t mind, they can make those too, but can they make something else?

3 Bombie the Zombie ist ein von Carl Barks geschaffener Charakter, der hin und wieder Auftritte in den *Uncle Scrooge* und *Donald Duck Comics* hat. Von einem Voodoo Doktor beeinflusst folgt er dessen Anweisungen ohne Verstand. Anders als heute gängige Zombie-Versionen ist Bombie nicht tot, er fristet lediglich ein Dasein in Ohnmacht.



Don Rosa

**Talking about movies and characterization: All these Carl Barks characters already had a characterization and personality, did you ever want to have more creative freedom? Although you said you wrote the stories as a fan.**

No, I like his characters. I don't say that I depict them accurately. Everybody's got their own idea of how they should be done and I get plenty comments from people who say I do it completely wrong. So, like I said, don't read my stories, there are lots of other stories to read, I'm not trying to make you unhappy. They keep reading my stories though, I don't know why they keep reading.

But I just like doing Barks' characters or at least how I interpreted Barks' characters. Some people said to this sort of answer things like "Well, you've enjoyed some success doing Barks' characters. Why don't you go off and create your own character? You'll make a lot more money 'cause you'll own it" and I say "Well, but any character that I'd create next week, I wouldn't have grown up with. I wouldn't care about it." I grew up with Barks' characters literally from birth." I grew up with Barks' characters, literally from birth. If you know my history, my sister is eleven years older than I was, so I didn't just discover these characters when I was ten or twelve, they've been around my entire life. So that's the thrill and I still get a thrill, looking back at my so-called career over the last forty years and seeing that I was able to do Carl Barks' characters. The thing that gives me the biggest thrill when I think about it is that in countries like Finland, Norway, and America they've got series, books and albums, that feature Barks' original stories followed by my sequels. Wow!! (smiles) I never thought that would happen. That's an amazing thing. Still can't believe that that happened.

But your current question was about creative freedom. They always let me do whatever I wanted 'cause I thought I was depicting the characters the way they should be. So I never felt like I didn't have creative freedom.

**Is there any Duckburg character in which you recognize yourself?**

Well, everybody says Scrooge.

**And what do you think?**

There are two aspects of that – one aspect was, you know, I originally did one story for Gladstone Comics in America in 1987. And I thought I was just gonna do that one story. And then one thing lead to another, it's a long story, but when I found out, that I was maybe gonna actually trying to make a career out of telling stories about this character, I knew I couldn't enjoy doing stories about a character, that was simply greed. So I had to sort of twist that personality away from him wanting nothing but money, and make him enjoy actually the



Don Rosa



thrill of the adventure and the conquest and be able to succeed in everything he was doing. And treating his money like trophies instead of wealth, 'cause he doesn't spend it. He's obviously not gaining wealth to spend or to get power. He keeps it. So he must be treating it as a collector of trophies, the same way I treat my comic book collection or my music collection or something. Each one is a trophy of a search. I kinda turned him that way, so maybe I'm making him like myself in that sense.

And then on the other hand, the aspect of the way he looks: I've been wearing glasses like this (*points at his glasses: round with a metal frame*) ever since the seventies, not because of Scrooge McDuck, of course he has pince-nez, and it wasn't because of John Lennon. It's just kind of old-fashioned, and they just make sense. As Benjamin Franklin created glasses, they were round, 'cause your eyes are round. And I'm not the slightest connoisseur of fashion, I don't go looking for what glasses are in current fashion. I just think glasses should be round, and they just should be metal. But people say that I wear those because of Scrooge, and I don't have whiskers, but my hair in the back sometimes sticks out and looks like Scrooge (*laughs*).

So, they say I physically look like Scrooge. I don't know, that's something for a psychologist to decide if I actually try to make myself look like him. But I started depicting him as a lonely character and I don't see myself as lonely. I certainly have friends everywhere because of Carl Barks' characters.

But if I wanted to be like any of the Duckburg characters, that would be the nephews (*smiles*) 'cause they are the adults in the story. I grew up on the Barks stories in the 50s and the early 60s, when the nephews were like the adults. Donald and Scrooge were not juvenile but not as responsible. It was, I think, the Barks stories of the 40s, the kids were like mischievous and they were playing hooky from school. I never saw them that way. I was reading when they were the Junior Woodchucks, they were very noble examples of these. And of course the Junior Woodchuck Handbook, their compendium of all earthly knowledge. So I'd rather be a Junior Woodchuck.

**If you had to recommend a comic to someone who never has read comics or a comic reading beginner, what would it be?**

What kind of comic? Any comic?

**Yes.**

EC Comics. The Tales from the Crypt. Weird Science. These were the best comic books ever produced. Those were the best drawings and the most adult stories. Most people would say "Why don't you say: Carl Barks and Uncle Scrooge comics?" But that's different, that's a continuing character. The EC Comics were



Don Rosa

anthologies, they were adventure stories or crime stories, or detective stories, or horror stories. And if somebody had never read a comic book, I think that's what I'd recommend because they were for adults. Very sophisticated and sometimes very unsophisticated in the humor. Lots of people don't know it, do you have Mad Magazine in Germany?

**Yes.**

Mad Magazine started as Mad Comic Books and was one of the EC Comics. So that's they originated.

And I don't know if I'd recommend this, but when they asked me to do The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck series, I did not in any way try to design it for anybody to enjoy it except of Barks scholars. I was doing it just to solidify all the things that Barks had said that Scrooge had done when he was young and put it in one continuous, twelve-part story, so that everybody would know this is the way it is and ignore all the other stories that ever happened about Scrooge. This is the original and you see it all in one series of stories. But I didn't think that anybody would like it. And then it won the Eisner Award in America. Even though I won it, I assume, you know, in America comic readers don't read these kind of comics, like they do every other place else in the world. So, there were many, many younger Americans, well, in their 30s and 40s I guess, it's like 20 years ago, who decided, it won an Eisner, so they would read The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck, having never read an Uncle Scrooge Comic before and they liked it. I've seen other people who recommend it, that never read a Duck story, or Uncle Scrooge. And for some reasons, the ways he's depicted there, makes people interested in reading the Carl Barks stories that it's based on, which is good. I like to hear that, that they discovered the Carl Barks stories. So, I might recommend that. Not out of my own – I mean it's a great story and maybe it will lead them to read the Barks stories, which are the most popular comic books that have ever been created.

I'm not sure if you have to – sometimes there're things that you have to read when you're a kid to appreciate when you're an adult. You know what I mean? These people who tell me "You should watch Doctor Who". I've tried that, but I can't get into it, because I didn't watch it when I was 12 or 13 years old. So there's always a block right there.

One of my favorite TV shows from the 60s, 'cause I watched television from 7 o' clock til 11 o' clock every night, that's all I'd do. And it's amazing we had such a limited number of shows, but Lost in Space, if you heard of that, I think they got a new version of that now. And then there was the movie, not a very good movie, about 10, 15 years ago.

Anyway the original ran for three years and it was kind of tongue in cheek, it wasn't serious, but not a comedy. That's one of my favorite TV shows, but I'm certain I'd have to watch it the first time when I was like twelve years old to



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enjoy it. 'Cause I watched the whole series over again on the Blu-ray disc collection a couple of years ago and I can see how silly it is, but I liked it more than ever, it was even better than I remembered it (*laughs*).

**Well, I think we're done, but one last: I read you have a chili plantation now. What's it all about?**

Oh I should have brought you some – if I knew that you wanted some. Yeah, I brought 28 kg with me this time. It's a hobby, I have so many hobbies. I love hot chilies, so I grow about 40 different types every year. Even chilies you've never heard of, not the ones you get at the grocery, like common serrano or habanero – those chilies are not very good. But there are many others that are really delicious, they're hot, but they have a great taste. You must grow those yourself if you want them, but few people know of this possibility. I don't know which ones you get in German groceries?

**Not that many.**

I show you some, we've got three bags here. They're beautiful, all different colors and sometimes people ask "Are those real?" 'cause they look like pieces of plastic sculptures, they're so colorful and shiny.

**How did you get into that hobby?**

Well, when I was a kid I used to eat, like, hot Chinese mustard with food, hot chilies. I don't remember, at some point I discovered there are, let's say three or four thousand different types of chilies. And literally every color imaginable except blue, 'cause for some reasons there's no blue food (*laughs*).

*Mein herzlichster Dank gilt Stefan Brenner und natürlich Don Rosa – für das Interview sowie für die Erlaubnis, seine Zeichnungen nutzen zu dürfen!*



Don Rosa