WINNER OF THE 2012 HARVEY AWARD
PRAISE FOR THE ALEX TOOTH, GENIUS TRILOGY:

“What Mullaney and Canwell have done is nothing short of wonderful.” — Howard Chaykin, The Los Angeles Review of Books

“An astounding achievement. A game changer... Anyone with an interest in the medium should own and study this book. It’s one of those.” — Dan Nadel, The Comics Journal

“This massive coffee-table biography-cum-compilation makes a compelling argument for Tooth’s stature through its painstakingly researched text and copious visual examples that demonstrate his masterful illustration, graphic economy, and elegantly powerful design sense.” — Gordon Flagg, Dark Horse

THE CARTOON ART OF
ALEX TOOTH
DEAN MULLANEY & BRUCE CANWELL
Master model sheet, The Three Musketeers, 1968. The series provided Toth with a vehicle in which to focus his lifelong fascination with the Dumas classic and with swashbuckling heroes in general.
"Athos\n6'0"\ntall\nhair: trim yellow\ndrawings\ncolor trimming (jackets) and boot edgings

"Porthos\n6'3"\ntall\nhair:
141
ZAP!
JENKINS ENTRAPES
HIS OPPONENT

142
IT'S ALL OVER
FOR "FANG"
BOO!

Prowler runs into shot / dives head first over fence — into O'Hara's car which digging out, burning rubber.

Pan / cont.
The two new burgs into comet-like shape.
Genius, Animated
THE CARTOON ART OF
ALEX TOOTH

DEAN MULLANEY AND BRUCE CANWELL

THE LIBRARY OF AMERICAN COMICS

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Alex Toth was a storyteller. Although his membership card in the Animation Guild didn’t refer to him as a writer, a director, or an editor, he was all of these…and more.

One day he would be a marketing strategist, creating full color presentation pieces to sell the networks on a new series. The next day he’d be designing the lead characters to bring that series to life. The following day would be spent creating model sheets, rendering as many as a dozen angles and approaches to the same character; and for each episode there would be an impressive array of one-shot characters, incidental gadgets, control rooms, helicopters, space ships, and creatures large and small.

Next he would take a script and essentially direct the episode by storyboarding it to fit the time slot. He believed that the more detail and better direction he provided, the easier the job for the layout artists and animators who took the work to the next step.

At one point he was simultaneously working on ten different Saturday morning shows. “It was exhausting fun,” he recalled. “There’s a mindset which speedy production induces—need is met with solutions!” It was a merry-go-round ride through what’s now considered the heyday of television animation.

While he may have thought some of the lead characters interchangeable, he approached the work very much like his fellow Hungarian Michael Curtiz approached directing some of Toth’s favorite films—Captain Blood, The Sea Hawk, and The Adventures of Robin Hood. Curtiz is often quoted (whether apocryphally or not): “Who cares about character? I make it go so fast nobody notices.”

For Alex Toth, the sheer thrill of being a storyteller was a fulfilling enough motivation.

This book was made possible through the cooperation of the Toth family, the Hanna-Barbera and Warner Bros. corporate archives, and many fans and friends of Alex Toth who loaned artwork or provided scans of rare and valuable original works.

The history and personnel of the prolific Hanna-Barbera Studios are well documented in other books and are not within the purview of this volume. This is not a history of 1960s television cartoons, although an argument could be made that without Alex Toth’s contribution, that history would be a lot poorer, a lot less interesting, and a lot less remembered.

This book is also not an index to the adventure series output of the Hanna-Barbera Studios, although a similar argument could be made that in presenting so much of Alex Toth’s animation artwork, we have offered a visual overview of those series.

Alex Toth was a storyteller—and this book celebrates those stories in the largest collection of his animation work ever assembled.

Dean Mullaney, Editor
March 2014
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So great was the artist’s talent that few doors barred his path, and he found opening one door invariably led to others.

As a teenager the first door swung wide, giving him work on Eastern’s *Heroic Comics* and subsequently opening the door to higher-profile comic book assignments at National/DC. The many pages of dynamic “Johnny Thunder” western art he produced at DC helped him step across the threshold into newspaper cartooning, briefly assisting Warren Tufts on *Casey Ruggles*. More importantly, it transplanted the artist from New York’s brusque concrete and steel to California’s delightful sun and surf; he would call the Golden State home for most of the rest of his life.

Living in the Los Angeles area opened the door to a steady stream of jobs at Western Publishing, where the artist was granted access to studio lots and advance screenings—after all, the comic book adaptations had to be available on store spinner racks while the movies were playing and the television shows were airing (in those pre-home-video days a comics adaptation or a packet of View-Master reels were often the primary means by which a filmed story came into the household).

Access to the studios stimulated the artist’s long-time love of film, making him ponder a transition from the comic book industry he found increasingly frustrating into the celluloid world. That door opened in the form of a storyboarding assignment on a science fiction cheapie called *The Angry Red Planet*. The artist leaped at the chance, subsequently learning that though overlaps existed between film and comics, each came with its own set of unique requirements. He also learned that *The Angry Red Planet* would not immediately lead to more live-action film work. Fortunately, animated cartoons were moving onto the small screen and the artist’s *Red Planet* storyboards and his comic book oeuvre would help place him squarely in front of the freshly-minted TV animation door.

Armed with a smidgen of film experience, a sterling portfolio, a questing mind, and a seemingly-inexhaustible reservoir of skill, the artist would not just open that door…he would spend portions of the next quarter-century blowing it off its hinges.
ABOVE: Production drawing in pencil of navigator Crystal Mace from Space Angel, early 1960s.
More than simply an artist—more than a genius at storytelling, shot selection, and design—Alex Toth was always at heart a student, eager to learn new techniques and solve new problems, driven to combine effect with economy. As America geared up for the first Presidential race to be decided by television, Toth embarked on a venture that was bringing original animated adventure cartoons into American living rooms via the broadcast medium, a venture that presented him an opportunity to gain new skills from a pair of teachers he could respect.

Clark Haas Jr. and Hiram Mankin both spent time assisting one of Alex’s idols, the great Roy Crane—at different times during Buz Sawyer’s run, the two men helped Crane produce that popular, long-running comic strip. Prior to signing on with Crane, Mankin began his professional career with a cup of coffee in Joe Shuster’s Superman studio before moving to a long stint assisting Zack (Smilin’ Jack) Mosley. He spent much of the 1950s doing comic book work and drawing the Roy Rogers newspaper strip. For his part, Haas moved out of comics and into broadcasting late in the ‘50s: he formed Cambria Studios, partnering with one of Hollywood’s countless fringe players, Edwin Gillette. It was Gillette—using experience gained from a degree in film and a handful of War-years reels produced for the U.S. government—who had experimented with split-beam images of live-action mouths projected onto otherwise-static cartoon drawings of faces. These composites resulted in characters who more closely mimicked the appearance of speech than did their animated competitors. Gillette patented his technique, calling it “Synchro-Vox” and merging it with Haas’s vision of a white-haired, two-fisted knockabout hero who served as homage to Crane and those adventure-strip creators who followed him, men like Milton Caniff and Frank Robbins, among others.

With Haas formulating stories, Mankin spearheading art production, and Gillette’s Synchro-Vox lending a touch of the unique, Cambria’s first televised release, Clutch Cargo, was born. Seeking help late in the show’s production run, Haas hired Alex Toth to do layouts; Mankin taught his fellow comic book expatriate the animation ropes. Alex so impressed his bosses during his short stint on Clutch that, after a brief production hiatus, Cambria re-hired the artist to design a new Synchro-Vox series, Space Angel, and to lead (and help staff) Angel’s six-man art department. Alex reached out to Warren Tufts, his former employer on the comic strip Casey Ruggles, and also hired Doug Wildey, already a mainstay within the comic book and newspaper strip industry. “[I] brought [Doug] out from Arizona,” Toth recalled. “Put him up at my home his first week or so, ’til he found his own place to bring his wife and kids to live in, from Tucson—the hiring almost didn’t happen, but Hi Mankin urged me to do so—despite my fears that Doug’s reliance on photoswipes in his comic strip/book work would be a disadvantage in the studio when/where we all had to make it up/brain it out/imagine it—and draw it cold!” Toth soon realized that Wildey could do more than carry his weight.

Wildey, Tufts, Mankin, and Toth would all reunite at Hanna-Barbera Studios not long after Space Angel ceased production.

Twenty-first century animation techniques have turned those five-minute Clutch Cargo and Space Angel episodes into quaint relics, Synchro-Vox into an oddity that briefly blipped, then faded from the pop culture radar screen. Yet Cambria’s output helped inspire cartoon artists whose careers span from the classic done-by-hand productions to modern computer-generated fare. One of those talents is Emmy Award winner Robert Alvarez. As a student in a California Catholic school,
young Alvarez parried a condescending classmate's snide remarks by vowing to grow up to become an animator, then made good on his promise: by the late 1960s Alvarez had his first assignment on The Beatles's animated motion picture, *Yellow Submarine* ("I recall drawing roses on the Blue Meanies").

Alvarez has worked steadily in the industry since, animating, storyboarding, and directing everything from *Yogi's Space Race* to *G.I. Joe to Regular Show*, which remains in production as of 2013. Alvarez earned television's highest honors for his contributions to the Genndy Tartakovsky-helmed *Powerpuff Girls*, *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, and *Samurai Jack*. Interviewed for this book, Alvarez noted the effect Cambria's output had on him as a youth, and how *Space Angel* marked his close encounter of the first kind with the art of Alex Toth:

I actually saw [Toth's] artwork before I ever realized who he was...I can remember in the early '60s seeing cartoons like *Space Angel*. That was his artwork. I didn't know it, but I saw the artwork and I went, "Hey, this is great!"

I was reading comic books in the '50s, [but] I wasn't seeing any of his artwork because I only saw DCs—that's all that was sold where I grew up. *Superman, Batman, Jimmy Olsen, Adventure, Action Comics*—whatever was there, I would read them, and after I read them I would just stare at the artwork. I remember those comics, and he wasn't doing them. But I saw *Space Angel* and I really liked the way they looked. They were terrible cartoons, in the sense that there was no animation, but I was sort of fascinated that they were doing the synchronization with the live action, and I really liked the artwork.

Alvarez also discussed how teaming with a schoolmate helped set them both on a career path:

I was in the seventh grade in North Hollywood when I met this kid in the same class with me, who to this day is still a good friend of mine, and he also does the same thing I do in animation. He brought some cels from *The Flintstones* show that he got from his neighbor, who was an executive at CBS. So my friend knew where Hanna-Barbera was and after school we started riding our bikes to Hanna-Barbera and the studios in the San Fernando Valley—Hanna-Barbera and Format Films were there at the time, and UPA. We would jump into the trash cans and take anything we could find. Drawings, animation cels, anything.

It became an obsession, finding the artwork and collecting the artwork. In those days nobody wanted it, studios would throw the stuff out. So my friend and I would collect the artwork and we knew that we both had this similar interest in animation and we started doing our own little home movies with eight millimeter, [then] we both got into the Ocean Art School. At the time that was the place to go—there really were no other animation departments around.

But those trips to Hanna-Barbera—that's really how it all happened.

For Robert Alvarez, the road to a professional lifetime devoted to cartoon entertainment began with bicycle trips to Hanna-Barbera. Had those trips lasted into the mid-1960s, Alvarez might have found some Alex Toth treasures embedded in the studio trash.
PAGES 12-15:
Original artwork from Space Angel (1962). Toth recalled in 1981: “It was fun, simple, low budget creative chutzpah, finding new/old ways to cheat semblance of ‘reality’ movement, spfx, into our little films.”