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## Gerard way young animal interview

We Need Voices November 28, 2016 Web Exclusive By Aug Stone I think there's an artistic subconscious that people share. I feel like artists and creative types gel up. It's very strange, but it happens all the time, that evasive zeitgeist thing that people talk about. People arrive unconscious on the same wavelength in the world. Gerard Way and I are staying in the Donor Lounge of the Carolina Theater in Durham on the second day of North Carolina Comicon. Way was the former lead singer of My Chemical Romance from 2001 to 2013, and in 2014 released his debut solo album, *Hesitating Alien*. But in recent years, he has also been focusing on his successful comic book writing career, especially with the Eisner award winning series for Dark Horse Comics, *The Umbrella Academy*. This afternoon Way made his way to the lounge just after finishing a panel for *Mama Panic*, one of the four new titles he released for Young Animal's footprint on DC Comics. This morning was the panel for *Shade, Changing the Face* and tomorrow there will be those for the two comics Way is written personally, *Cave Carson* has a cyber eye and *Doom Patrol*. At A Night with Gerard Way last night he kicked off the event by reading something he had written the morning after the election two days before. I'm not going to talk about politics, and he did very emotionally to talk about what is needed right now for us, as people continue and heal. How important it is to create, and thus create the world around us and make a better one. And how vital it is to have the courage to be who you are. In their own way (and Gerard imagines the four series will bind from the dots), each of these new comics deals with exactly these things—characters that come to terms with strange and violent worlds we find ourselves in and taking them on with style and heart. Aug Stone (Under Radar): Does your year work? Gerard Way: It's going really well. It's very crowded, but it was very positive. [My daughter] The bandit's in second grade now, and he's very interesting. She loves school and it's just great to see her grow up and turn into this person. Work has made me very happy, I'm doing something I love to do. I think the best thing anyone can do right now is bring positiveness to people. We really need it. We need art, and we need voices, and we need people to say what they feel. I talk a lot to my therapist about healing and she noticed that it's something that I have a penchant for. It all starts with yourself, and if you need healing maybe you can help heal other people. In *My Chemical Romance*, there was a mission to change people's lives. And I still see that in comics, the lives of the characters change and with this. This is such an important mission to have, but I also imagine it is very difficult to keep up with that that intensity. That's a big question because it was virtually impossible to keep that. And that's pretty much what happened to me. I was talking to Ray [Toro's] guitarist recently and we were trying to understand what I thought about *My Chemical Romance* and what really happened to me and I felt. And I said it's hard to feel or convey peace if you talk like a freight train, you know? So that was part of it. With wanting to change people's lives, I think I finally started to feel that I was either failing people or I wasn't changing people's lives or maybe the band was losing potency... It started falling apart for me, that's what happened to the band. I see this mission with comics, too, yes, and I think my way of channeling the same kind of energy is in the books. I'd like the books to be able to change their minds or open their minds. I think Young Animal books are really about expansion, and introspection, and the question you in the universe. I feel like some of the books are a little cosmic, especially *Doom Patrol*. It's very cosmic. And I like that. Do you ever have to remember that mission? [Believes.] I don't necessarily know that's the mission anymore. I think it's really about sharing, and getting people to share. And get people to experiment and do things and make art. I don't feel like leading a charge anymore. There's something about that that... it's not so much responsibility, but there's a weird kind of power that comes with it, the kind of power I wasn't interested in having. Power is a very corruptible thing. And I think even with the best intentions and wanting to use power forever, you can still find traps out there, and you can really eat yourself and mess with your psychology. What did you learn from writing *The Umbrella Academy* and *The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys* you now bring to *Young Animal*? [Gets horny.] I learned a lot working with two great editors, Scott Allie [Umbrella Academy] and Sierra Hahn [Killjoys]. Obviously, I was at SVA [School of Visual Arts] and I had great teachers like Klaus Janson, Carmine Infantino, Sal Amendola, Joe Orlando before he died, Joey Cavalieri, and Darcy Dame, a smattering of different types of comic book artists and writers. So coming into *Umbrella Academy* was like getting an accident refresher course from Scott about mechanics. My first instinct was to throw a bunch of weirdos in there and see what sticks. But Scott made me go in and re-engineer this to make him pay. It can't just be weird, you have to have some significance behind what you're doing. There must be a reason for the oddities. I learned a lot from him, a lot about dialogue. He certainly beat me in shape. Some of these bands I had to do eight projects, I myself even one of them had nine projects. And with *Killjoys* I learned to be a collaborator with someone who makes a book. Sharing and compromise, things like that. Coming with someone else to make a common vision. And Sierra was great for that. Very encouraging, very inspiring. A great editor asks the right questions. I've been very lucky to work with great publishers constantly. Listening to you speak at the boards I have the feeling that you are really enjoying this collaborative effort. Yes. It's very important, vital. Being in a band teaches you about collaboration, and over time there are things that can hide collaboration. The press has a way of swelling your ego. You can start out as a great collaborator, but if you go off the net you can become a bad one. After the band has finished, I need to relearn to be a collaborator. I was a little bit controlling towards the end of my *Chemical Romance*, so I really took that to heart. Everything since I left *My Chemical Romance* has been about me can improve, looking at my mistakes, looking inward and saying, What can I do better? Can I get better? We started with clear and direct and honest communication with people. Then I moved to become a good collaborator. That's why collaboration is so important to *Young Animal*, because there's a lot of really hard work going on by a lot of people to make sure that these things come out and they come out great. Comics are very hard to make. And I think different perspectives and different voices is what makes *Young Animal* special. What's going on with *Umbrella Academy*? I'm still writing and Gabriel [Bä] is still drawing. There was a bit of a speed bump with getting *Young Animal* going and writing *Doom Patrol* and stuff like that. There were little moments when I had to dive, but I'm getting back on track. And there's a TV show of it in the works. Like anything in Hollywood, you can never be sure what will happen to her. But it was all very positive and we've had meetings with different companies and they're very interested in the *Umbrella Academy*, so we'll have to see. I don't get much hope for this stuff. If it happens, then you appreciate it. How much will you be involved in the TV show? I'm involved in a minimal sense. I'm at the presentation meetings. I basically provide support to Jeremy Slater, who is showrunner/writer and he has a distinct vision for the show. I trust his vision, because he's trying to make the best version of Gabriel and my comic. Did you choose the characters for *Young Animal*? Obviously, *Young Animal* is rooted in the work of Karen Berger starting *Vertigo*, and the work of all her creators that she discovered at that time. And then in Shelly Bond's work in taking over *Vertigo* also working at *Vertigo* with Karen Berger. The work that the two women did, and all at *Vertigo* at the time, it was a huge inspiration. So I knew I wanted one or two books rooted in this. But I also knew I wanted to then separate the line from *Vertigo* and be able to say, It's not pretty *Vertigo*. Because it's not, it was going to be different. D.C. characters have not been a part of *Vertigo* in a very long time. I thought it would be strange to bring these characters back to *Vertigo* now that *Vertigo* has grown into its own wonderful creator-owned thing. But that's why *Cave Carson* was chosen because it was like, okay, I don't think *Cave* would ever have been in *Vertigo*. But it's still mature readers and it's on the edge of the D.C. universe, so that's its own thing. Also, I don't necessarily think that a gotham book would have been in *Vertigo* either so I then brought in *Mama Panic*. *Young Animal* is a little more heavily connected to the DC universe than some of the *Vertigo* books have become at some point because they really ended up in their own worlds. Tell me about your feelings about Grant Morrison's race in *Doom Patrol*. Oh, man, that's the series that when I re-read it after they started re-releasing trades, that made me want to write comics and get back into comics. It really gave me the inspiration to be free and make comics cool and weird and fun. It felt like something like that was missing from the comics, even though Grant is heavily involved and doing work to this day, I felt like there was something that *The Patrol* *Doom* was missing from the comics. And I think I managed to turn that a little bit. And not just do a cover band version of that stuff. What inspired you to get *Flex Mentallo* in? I like *Flex*. I loved him in Grant's run, he shows up in and it's an important part of this one bow, and then he shows up and then he has his own adventure in the book *Frank Pretty*. I was like, we have to use *Flex*. I find it so interesting. Did you enter *Morning Pages*? I got into it through the book *The Artist's Way*. At first I was very resistant to them, but then I realized what they were actually doing and were getting me through. They're starting to become some kind of therapy. They are a very useful tool and it was all I felt I needed at that time, so I didn't continue with the *Artist's Way*. Although I still find things in this book to be very useful, even if I don't get to do them. Like when he suggests you take an artist's date and go to the museum or go see a movie by yourself, you do something to fill the fountain. I think this is very important. For *Morning Pages* I got this amazing little device called *Freewrite*, which is essentially a word processor where you can't go back edit, you can only delete what you just wrote. It's really to come out stream-of-consciousness. It's probably great to write a book or something if you just have to get a For my purposes it's not super great to write comics, because for me while you're writing comics you move around a lot, editing, mixing, and changing. Did you enter *Transcendental Meditation*? I think just like a lot of people did, through David Lynch, hearing him talk about it and then watching videos about his foundation, which brings it to prisons and schools. Then I said, I'm going to do this. I feel like I'm also ready for something new in my life to help me better understand my brain or maximize my free space. My wife and I have been to class and we love it. It's really good at quietly quieting my mind, during the process and then throughout the rest of the day, until I do my second session. So far we like it. See writing lyrics versus writing comics? I learned to play to my strengths in terms of comic writing, so I learned to be more lyrical. I think it's a power of mine to be a lyricist. For a lot of *Umbrella* 'til maybe the second series, it was me writing I thought I was supposed to write comics. And then, the more comics I wrote, I started to realize that I needed to bring more of myself into the way I wrote. So I started bringing in things like rhythm and lyrical quality. You see a lot of this in *Doom Patrol*, at least once or twice a problem. These lyrical tangents and sometimes the way the characters talk. When you have to produce something from one month to the next, it has to come from somewhere. And my default way is to be lyrical. When I really need to get something off the page and I really need to do the book work, sometimes I find my way into a character through writing like it was lyrics. What are you doing musically right now? I'm writing music, but I'm pretty casual about it right now. I'd love to make a record next year. It would be great to start another one because I'm starting to get itchy to tour, but I still want to be very focused on *Young Animal*. It would be great to find a way in my life to do both work, because I really enjoy doing both. I miss the music a little bit, but I ended up doing a song with Ray Toro for *Cave Carson*, so I kept the musical spirit alive. My last standard question (and there's a special resonance here because Casey Brinke's mother in *Doom Patrol* not just this) is if you had stolen a space shuttle and were flying it straight into the Sun, what would you like to be listened to? Oh, my God, probably David Bowie. But not like something too on the nose [laughs] like *Space Oddity*. Or Lou Reed's *Perfect Day*. *Perfect Day* is probably great for flying in the sun. [www.gerardway.com](http://www.gerardway.com) [www.dccomics.com](http://www.dccomics.com)

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