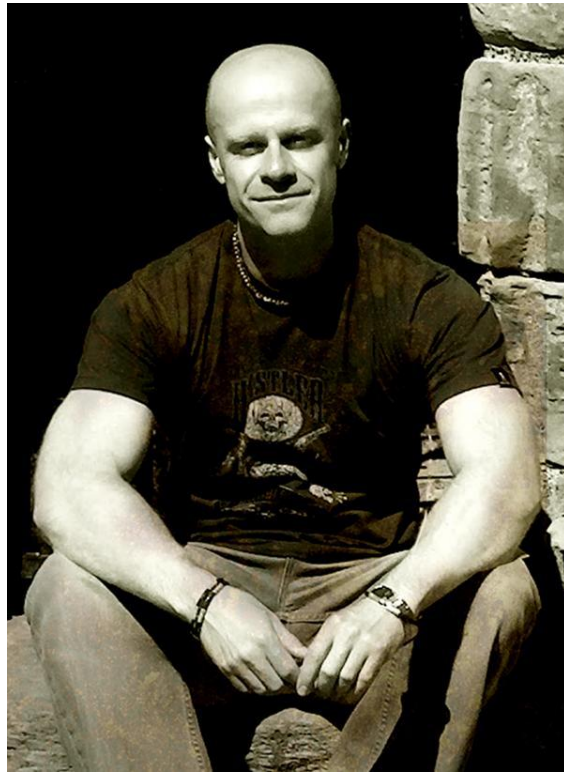


## Nick Percival



Nick Percival's highly detailed and intricate artwork has graced countless books, videogames, film, and television projects. Fans might recognize his work from Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* (BOOM! Studios), *World of Warcraft*, *Magic the Gathering*, *Fangoria*, and *D&D*. He has worked for such illustrious clients as SONY, Warner Brothers, Marvel, the Sci-Fi and History channels, Hasbro, Atari, and Johnny Depps Infinitum Nihil, just to name a few. Nick is also creator of the award-winning, hardcover graphic novel *LEGENDS: The Enchanted*.

### **What were you like a child growing up? What are your fondest memories from that time?**

I was always into things that were slightly weird or different from the mainstream which was why comics, monster movies and stuff like that always appealed to me. I remember desperately wanting super powers as a kid or thinking I could train myself like Batman – I really thought all that stuff was possible. I used to make my own super-hero costumes and even wore one under my regular clothes at school one day, ready to save the world.

I remember my Dad bringing me all these German versions of Marvel and DC comics he'd get when he travelled. I couldn't read them, so I had to guess what was going on in the stories. That wasn't a problem since at that age, the main thing for me was the artwork. I'd spend hours copying the covers and comic strips, learning all the time.

Because my parents were teachers, it was easy to have plenty of access to paper and art materials, so I could spend days just drawing and creating my own characters or making up my own versions of Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Hulk stories – very geeky stuff like that.

My Grandfather was an Austrian artist and pretty well established so I'm sure that must have played a role in where I get some of the ability from. I'm self-taught as an artist and I think you develop your own style and techniques much better that way. You might make a lot more mistakes but anything you discover for yourself, you seem to hold onto more.



**How do you think your early days influenced you to be who you are today?**

I always had the notion that if you really wanted to succeed at something, it's always possible. I never felt that anything was off limits or impossible to achieve. That attitude helped when I was older and trying to break into the industry and dealing with rejection letters (which every creative has got at some point) and so on. I've always been very driven in what I choose to do and I really believe you need that tunnel vision to ever actually complete any large body of work and constantly move forward.





### **Did you always want to be an artist?**

Very much from an early age I was always drawing and specifically creating comic strips. I was that kid at school when someone wanted something drawn, they'd get me to do it. From about eight years old, I wanted to create comic books and it was from around that age that I started getting seriously into the Marvel and to a lesser extent, the DC comic book characters and storylines. Living in the UK, it was difficult then to.

### **Who are some the artists that influenced you from early on?**

Very early on, it was all super-hero stuff, so I was a big fan of John Byrne (X-Men, Fantastic Four), Frank Miller (Daredevil), Alan Davis (Captain Britain), etc. I loved Sal Buscema's 'Hulk' work. I was a massive Marvel geek. As I got a little bit older, I got more into 2000ad and Judge Dredd and as I started to dabble with fully painted artwork, guys like Bernie Wrightson, Bill Sienkiewicz, Richard Corben, James Bama and Frank Frazetta all started to have a huge impact on me. I also discovered the classic horror titles, eventually tracking down all the old EC stuff - *Tales From the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror*, all amazing and inspiring work. Film also started to have more of an influence. I love all the old Universal horror movies, so was really getting into dramatic lighting, deep shadows, camera angles, lots of texture, etc.



**When did you first begin to seriously consider the profession of an artist?**

It's always something I wanted to do and I was always working at building up a decent portfolio of art samples throughout the years. I briefly looked at going to Art College but ended up working in a comic book store and then becoming the manager of the place. That gave me a bunch of good contacts working there and finally got me the chance to go to London and visit the offices of 2000AD - this is the UK comic that's now 35 years old and features Judge Dredd every week as well as a huge range of other sci-fi, fantasy, horror and all sorts of cool characters and storylines. Nearly all the biggest names in the comic book world have cut their teeth working for this title (Alan Moore, Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Garth Ennis, Alan Davis, Brian Bolland, Simon Bisley, to name but a few).

Anyway, I pitched them a short story and showed some art. They ended up taking me to lunch and hired me on the spot. On the train journey back home, I remember deciding to quit my job at the comic book store the next day, which I did and luckily, I've been in work ever since.



### **How do you think computer animation has changed the art world?**

At the end of the day, it's just another creative tool like anything else. You'll get good artists and bad artists regardless of the medium they use to create their art. After several years in comics, I got heavily into CGI animation which was great for storytelling and ultimately helped me develop the skills to paint digitally. I think the danger with digital stuff is that a lot of it can look the same. Some people who have only ever learned to paint on the computer are using all the same brushes, blenders, effects and filters or textures – a lot of can look slick but ultimately very boring, to me at least.

### **How does computer animation differ most from the work done by hand? What was the most challenging thing you faced when first starting to work with that medium?**

I spent many years painting with 'real' paints – acrylics and some oil color work and in a perfect world I'd probably do most of my work this way. I do most of my comic book world digitally now though mainly for speed. I still put a lot of effort into making it look 'painted' but to get large amounts of work done to deadlines and having the ability to make faster changes to the art means digital wins out on a day to day basis. I still create private commissions using traditional techniques and it's always fun to do but living in the real world, the majority of my work has to be digital these days.

### **How does it feel to make a living doing what you love?**

It's pretty cool because when you're young and just starting out, you'd do this kind of work for free. That wears off pretty quick though, when you have tons of pages and covers to produce, or film concept art and things like that but this is something I always wanted to do, so it's not too bad. I always said the only character I'd paint for free would be the Hulk and I have a Hulk horror story that I'd love to get around to. I've done some work for Marvel but can't see this happening anytime soon. ..(And I'm afraid, I would need to get paid...:)



**Have you enjoyed getting to work on Clive Barker's *Hellraiser*? Are you a fan of his artwork as well as his writing?**

Clive's great and has an amazing imagination. For some of the *Hellraiser* covers, I'd get little handwritten scrawled notes and sometimes little sketches that were pretty hard to make out but it was cool to see how his mind works and how he comes up with some of his ideas. I think his art is very powerful and just like his writing, he has his own original style.

**Are there any projects you have enjoyed more than others?**

I always like painting Judge Dredd and the *Hellraiser* work was cool. I painted a couple of covers for the horror magazine, *Fangoria* which was fun. I've read that magazine for years and I got to paint portraits of director John Carpenter and a zombie version of FX legend, Tom Savini, so it was nice to see those on the front covers.

My own hardcover graphic novel, *LEGENDS: The Enchanted* was always a big deal for me since I did the whole thing (script and art), so that was a landmark project for me that led to many other things both in comics and film.





**What one subject do you most like to cover in your work?**

I'm not sure. My work does seem to go into the darker territory in terms of subject matter and I do seem to be getting a rep as a horror artist which I guess is no bad thing but I do like a lot of different stuff. I'm not a huge fan of gore and so on. I prefer a spookier atmosphere and more creature led horror work, so I guess that comes out in my work. Certainly on the things I'm working on at the moment.

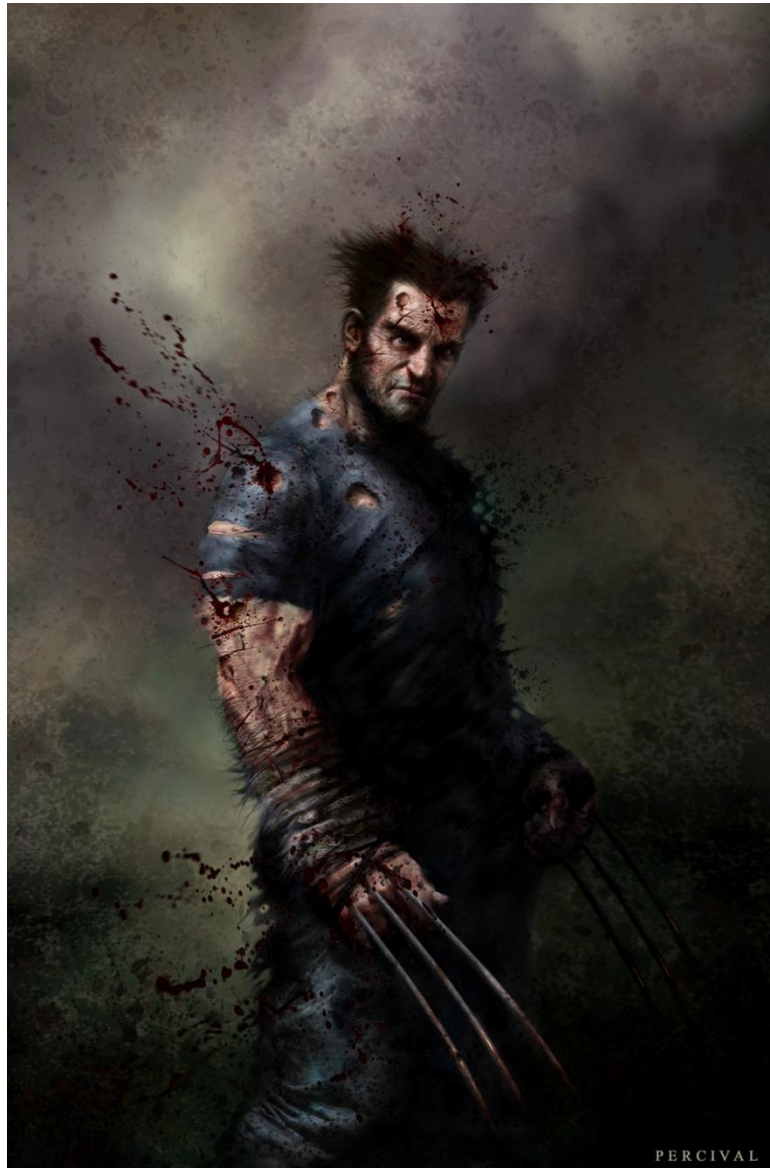


**Is there anything you'd yet like to cover? Do you have a dream project so to speak?**

In between my paid work and a huge new graphic novel series that I'm both writing and painting, in my little spare time (!) I'm actually working on my dream project but can't say what it is yet! I am slowly getting more into film and aside from the various film concept and production art I've done, I'm moving more towards actual film projects that I'm developing, so that should hopefully be very cool.

**Are there any little known things about you that your fans might be surprised to learn?**

Probably not surprising but I collect vintage film posters, Frankenstein models, love cats, toast and drink far too much tea. Earth shattering info, I know.



**What do you like to do when you aren't working?**

When that very rarely happens, most of my time is taken up providing a taxi service for my kids, trying to lift moderately heavy things at the gym, cleaning out the studio, catching up on TV shows/movies/games and of course, spending time with my lovely wife!

**How do you feel about *LEGENDS* being picked up by Ron Howard's Imagine Entertainment?**

It was cool and gives you a firsthand look at the mad workings of Hollywood but reality sets in and you realize how things really work in that world and how time consuming the process of making a film is. It's led to a number of other things for me that I can't complain about, so it's all good and if it finally makes it to film, that'd be great but I'm a realist, so I'll believe it when I see it.



**When you first started your career did you ever dream it would have led you all the places it has?**

Not at all. I originally just wanted to draw monsters and super-heroes and that was it. The fact it's led to me creating, writing and painting my own books, working with other big names in the industry, the film meetings and getting humbling and amazing feedback from fans who actually part with their money to buy my work, blows me away.

**What advice would you offer others who wish to pursue a similar career? What is the very first step on the journey to become an artist do you think?**

Aside from keep creating artwork, I think you really need to get published. Even if that's some small indie company or self-publishing online or whatever – you really need to get your work out there and be persistent. That's easier to do now with the internet it's not too hard to get your work seen but you probably have to be of a higher quality now since there's more competition. It takes time to build up a client base and reputation, so you have to be in for the long haul – and be prepared to work some crazy hours.

**What projects are you currently working on?**

I'm still painting covers for various folks at BOOM, IDW, 2000AD as well as various bits of film concept work and other pieces but the main project is *THE FAMILY* which is my new six volume graphic novel series. Volume one is out late Spring this year in Europe and will also be printed in *Heavy Metal* magazine in the US, followed by a graphic novel collection. It's kind of a twisted post-apocalyptic adventure but told in a quite different way and style normally associated with that genre. They'll be a lot more news on this and some preview pages coming very soon. It's an epic project – much bigger in scope than *LEGENDS*.

**Is there anything you'd like to say in closing?**

Just a big thanks to the people that take the time to pick up my work and that the best is really yet to come, so please stick with it....cheers!