

2 Alternative Choices

In May, Alternative Comics will release two new graphic novels:

The White Elephant by Damon Hurd and Christopher Steininger and **Salmon Doubts** by Adam Sacks. Damon Hurd and Adam Sacks talk to each other about their respective books.

The White Elephant

ADAM SACKS: *You call The White Elephant a play staged on paper. Why did you choose to tell this story as a comic of a play?*

DAMON HURD: I've had some interest in playwriting for some time now and I thought that this particular story would lend itself well to that format. I had a very visual story in mind, and that lent itself to the graphic novel format, so I decided to try and fuse them. I had been suffering from insomnia at the time of the book's writing, just as Gene does in the story, and I began to have these half-waking dreams of myself in this sort of surreal therapy session. The play is really a construct of Gene's mind, it's the stage of his subconscious if you will.

AS: *How was it working with Christopher Steininger?*

DH: Incredible. He really brought a sensibility to the book that not only met my vision but exceeded it. He took a script written before his involvement and truly made it his own. It turned out to be a wonderful collaboration that I hope we can repeat in the future.

AS: *Why a White Elephant?*

DH: It seemed a good choice for a physical manifestation of Gene's demons. It's large and menacing, and I borrowed the notion of the elephant itself from the old adage of

the elephant in the room that everyone sees but no one acknowledges which is a good analogy for the way Gene and Johnny fail to reconnect their relationship.

AS: *What do you hope people will take away from this work?*

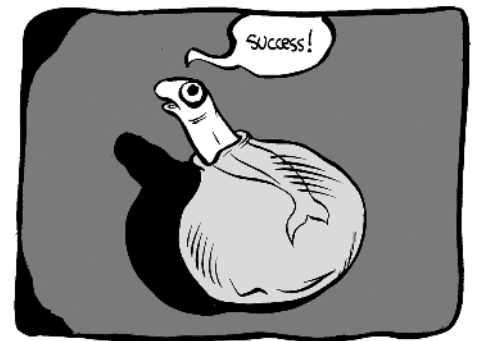
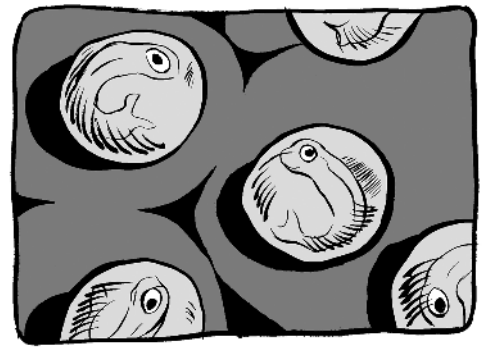
DH: I hope they can learn from Gene and Johnny's mistakes. I truly wish that they could have overcome the reality that separates them in the story, and I hope that readers may recognize similar lost relationships in their own lives and perhaps choose to mend them. This is very much about one facing their darkest demons. The ones that plague their dreams. I think that is something that everyone can relate to.

Salmon Doubts

DH: *In Salmon Doubts you didn't make the fish anthropomorphic, as many cartoonists do. Why the decision to keep the fish in their natural setting and disposition?*

AS: I chose to do a comic about salmon because I felt they could be a great metaphor. Had I made the fish just like people it would have undermined the whole story. So, before writing the plot I decided that all the characters would look like salmon and none would make reference to anything human. It made my job harder since it meant all the characters looked the same and I couldn't use simple phrases like "Oh man." It was definitely worth it though, since I ended up with a bizarre world that I never would have thought to create otherwise. Also, trying to imagine what salmon would do is so much more interesting than trying to imagine what people would do if they were salmon.

DH: *As I get a bit further into adulthood I'm noticing a lot of my peers choosing Henry's path and opting to choose a mate, spawn, and give up on the ocean. Do you see Geoff and his defiance as an alternative to this well-worn future that a lot of us are destined to go live out?*



AS: I tried to approach the story evenhandedly. Although Geoff gets more screen time than Henry, I didn't want to make either a hero. They both do what makes them happy. It's up to the reader to decide what they see past that.

DH: *How do you see Salmon Doubts being received? What are your hopes for readers of the work?*

AS: First and foremost Salmon Doubts is a comedy. If you laugh while reading it, I'm happy. If you laugh and also see a deeper truth in it, then maybe I'll be a little happier. If you like quirky humor, you should give this a shot.

The White Elephant By Damon Hurd and Christopher Steininger, \$6.95, 64 pages, trade paperback, B&W, ISBN: 1-891867-64-4

Salmon Doubts By Adam Sacks, 128 pages, 7" x 9.25", \$14.95, deluxe trade paperback, partial color, ISBN: 1-891867-71-7

Both coming from Alternative Comics this May.

