

“Exactly who are you, and why should our



### VITAL STATS

**Full Name:** Donald Mitchell Scheele (pronounced *she-lee*)  
**Born:** October 10, 1952  
**Current Residence:** Albany, OR  
**Occupation:** Graphic Artist  
**Credits:** Member of 1995 Albany West II Softball League Champions; **MANTHOLOGY—THE BOOK OF MANTIDS**; Thousands of t-shirt designs; a 25 ft. replica of **THE YELLOW SUBMARINE**. In Comics? Listed as “Jim Salicrup’s Good Right Hand” in the 1976 Mighty Marvel Calendar; “Clifwalk” story published in **PROFOLIO #2**, a small press anthology; and the hot new book, **SURF SUMO**.  
**Hobbies:** Ratball, summer softball, agate hunting, microbrew tasting.  
**Things He Collects:** Comic Books, Addams Family memorabilia, agates, books by or about Sir Richard Francis Burton.  
**Worst Stupidest Jobs Ever Done:** Shingle-Stacker, Brick-Chipper; Electric Screwdriver Operator.

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readership be interested in reading this?”

# MITCH SCHEELE

**Q**iven the opportunity of seeing my name in print for the first time in many years, even if it meant interviewing a small-time little-known “funny book” artist — someone who has been rejected time-after-time by publishers large and small for more than twenty years — well, I just had to do it... for the sake of my family. You see, most of my ancestors were farmers or fishermen, and the last time one of them made any kind of name for himself was when my great-great-grandfather Tamme Frieden Trauernicht wrote a manual on bee culture.

At first glimpse, there is little that differentiates Mitch Scheele from any other face in the crowd. Barely six feet tall, he is well-past forty, and has added ten pounds of pudge to his once stick-like frame. Fancying himself “the best right fielder in Albany”, his strange concepts definitely come from that general vicinity. He lives in the middle of the Willamette valley, not far from Ilahée Xing with Debby, his wife of fifteen years, and two dogs of questionable lineage...

**SURF SUMO** is Mitch’s first book, and the barest initial clue as to the nature of his personal pocket universe.



TRIPPING TANGLES #2 — 1970

**HANS STEPHEN VON TRAUERNICHT:** Exactly who are you, and why should our readership be interested in reading this?

**MITCH:** I don’t think the readers are a bunch of quitters. If they’ve gotten this far, I’m sure they’ll see it to the end.

**HSV7:** Is it true that you claim to have started everything?

**MITCH:** Well, no... but almost. I can give a few examples of things I believe I originated. I still have a leather

wallet, dating from the early 70’s, which was hand-crafted by a hippie-type friend, and branded with my nickname during that time; **The Prince**.

Somewhere along the line I lost that nickname... was it found and re-affixed to a certain now-famous musician? In 1975 I wrote an article for the now-defunct **NOSTALGIA ILLUSTRATED** magazine, in which I described a giant fantasy pinball machine carnival ride.

Years later, somebody built one at the Omni in Atlanta, Georgia.

Is it a coincidence that I happened to live in the area; even before that... in 1974... and that some

called me the **Wizard of the boathouse**, back in Lakemont Georgia...?

**HSV7:** Whoa! Earth to Mitch!

Could you talk about some of your

early influences?

**MITCH:** I liked Superman and Zorro on TV. With some blue pajamas and a red towel around my neck, I became Superboy for a day. I also had a Zorro costume, and lunch pail. I started collecting comic books in sixth grade. If I’d collected basketball cards instead, I’d have money now. The first comics I got were **INCREDIBLE HULK #4**, and concurrent issues of **SUPERMAN**, **SUPERBOY**, **ADVENTURE**, and **ACTION**. I remember going to see **SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON** for 25¢ — or a carton of milk, or something. I loved the old Tarzan movies with **Johnny Weissmuller**, and anything about dinosaurs.

**HSV7:** Pretty boring stuff. When did you start thinking about being a comic book artist?

**MITCH:** I guess it started back in the hallowed halls of Lebanon Union High School, when I met **Cary Bradley**. I had done a big drawing of a genie up on the blackboard, and everybody was impressed with it, except him. We were in several classes together, as well as the school Chess Club. We developed a competitive type of friendship and collaboration that produced a lot of creative stuff. He was my best friend for long time. Our first fanzine was called **THE RAGNAROK AND THE ARMAGEDDON**, which was printed on a ditto machine. Then, we did two issues of **MYTHIC CRAZY**—dimly copied on one of those early



THE RAGNAROK AND THE ARMAGEDDON — 1969

## "...are you in any way jealous of former



Jack Cordes, Vern Coriell, Phillip José Farmer, and Mitch Scheele at the Mid-America Con in 1972.

behemothian Xerox machines that Cary's Dad had at his office. Mike Royer was visiting his parents in Lebanon at that time, and he was nice enough to give us a demonstration of his inking skill. He inked a figure from one of Cary's stories in MIGHTY CRAZY #2. We also did two issues of "Oaf Adventures", printed in offset; called TRIPPING TANGLES. None of those early endeavors sold more than a couple-dozen copies. I still have hundreds of them sitting in my archives. Through the letter columns of various comic books, Cary and I contacted other fans in Oregon, including Mark Verheiden, Mark Montchal, Randy Emberlin, Chris Warner, Dale Nelson, and Kurt Erichsen. Most of us attended "The First Oregon Mini-Con", which was held in Randy's basement sometime around 1970.

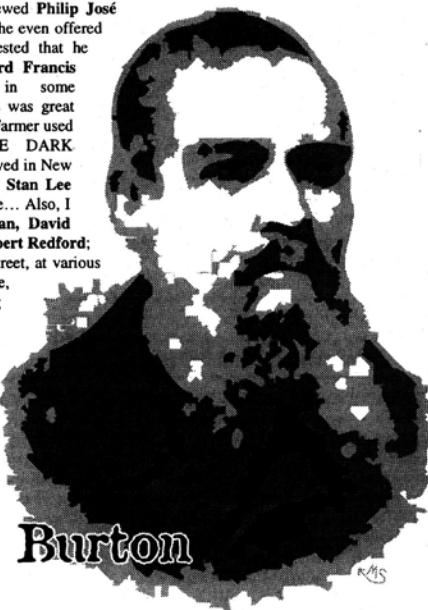
**HSVT:** Woo. (sarcasm) Pretty impressive background. Is Verheiden the most famous person you've met?

**MITCH:** Well, I have postcards from Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon. I had my picture taken with Ray Bradbury, at the San Diego Comics Convention; where I also met Jack Kirby, Forrest J. Ackerman, and Tony Isabella!

DAK and I interviewed Philip José Farmer once—and he even offered me a beer. I suggested that he should have Richard Francis Burton engage in some swordplay, since he was great with a blade... and Farmer used my idea in THE DARK DESIGN! When I lived in New York, I got to meet Stan Lee once, up in his office... Also, I saw Dustin Hoffman, David McCallum, and Robert Redford; walking down the street, at various times. And, of course, there is my long association with David Anthony Kraft... even got to see him buck-ass nekkid before!!

**HSVT:** —Is it true what they say about... oh, never mind!

**MITCH:** Fine.



## fellow-Oregonian Matt Groening??"



**HSVT:** Speaking of famous people: are you in any way jealous of former fellow-Oregonian Matt Groening??

**MITCH:** Well, an old friend once taught me *never to admit* to anything. But, while I can't claim to even approach Mr. Groening's artistic talent, I certainly don't think he was hired by a relative, or anything.

**HSVT:** Could you be a little more vague?

**MITCH:** It's hard to confess—I should have gotten to interview Zappa, instead of Groening. And his sister got to be on TV, too!

**HSVT:** Were you a big Zappa fan?

**MITCH:** Yeah. I got to see him in concert, eight times. When I saw the Alice Cooper comic book, I offered to do one about Zappa... for Jim Salicrup when he was at Marvel. After Revolutionary Comics got around to doing one a few years ago, I offered to do a Captain Beefheart comic, but they declined. They almost hired me to do some other work, for \$50 a page, but balked when I said I'd

send PMTs rather than my original art. "If it weren't for disappointments, I wouldn't have any appointments"—that's a quote from THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS.

**HSVT:** Oh, boo-hoo-hoo-hooo!

**MITCH:** SHUT IT!!!

(There is a break in the conversation, as Mr. Scheele gives his interviewer a couple of good smacks; sans milk or a bowl.)

**HSVT:** OUCH! OOF! Er... I mean... these are really a nice little snack! —Are they low in fat?? But seriously; why haven't you gotten into comics before now?

## "Once upon a time there was a handsome

MITCH: It's a long story—but since we seem to have time right now, I'll tell it to you... Once upon a time there was a handsome young artist named Wolfgang, who almost starred as the teenage Jesus in a pictorial version of the Bible, but unfortunately the deal fell through. He tried to start a rock group with a bunch of non-musicians, but everybody wanted to be Lennon (or was it McCartney??), and so the group eventually disbanded, and the various members scattered from the wind. He headed for the big city to seek fame and fortune, but when he got there he found that it was on an island, and the only way to get there was across a drawbridge. When Wolfgang placed his foot upon the bridge, it immediately raised, and he heard a booming voice from below, saying: "Who dares to use my bridge without asking permission?!"

"Sorry! My name is Wolfgang, and I wish to enter the city of fame and fortune!" Below, he could see a little red Troll, whose hand was on a lever.

"Ahh...HAR!HAR! HAR-har-har!! Ye may pass—after three questions are answered! First, what career do ye seek?" asked the Troll.

"To be an artist is my goal."

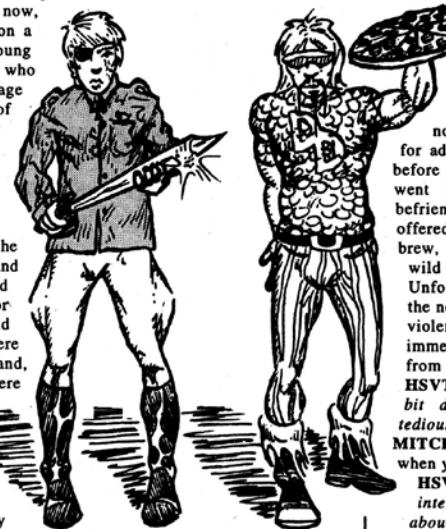
"Tch, tch... wilt thou subject thy nose to the grindstone, and keep it brown for the nonce??

"I have no fear of the grindstone, for it removes no skin from my nose, and its brown-ness will be so, from the sun only!"

The Troll snickered at this, but continued: "Be ye willing to copy the styles and techniques of those famous artists who have come before ye??"

"Why no... I want to make it on the basis of my own style and talent!"

"Then ye be a FOOL!!! ...but never mind; ye may pass! ...But be forewarned—



Emperor von Scheele & Davidus Antonio Kraftus as they appeared in the pages of DIE MUNICH ZEITUNGSENTE.



the City will offer no successes! However, the pizza is very good." Wolfgang didn't believe the cruel things told him by the Troll. But, he did not want to appear ungrateful for advice grudgingly given. So, before crossing the bridge, he went below and attempted to befriend the small monster. He offered some delicious micro-brew, carried in a jar from the wild forests of his homeland. Unfortunately, upon consuming the nectar, the Troll regurgitated violently, and fell into an immediate and noisome sleep, from which he never awoke.

HSVT: \*YAWN!\* I'm feeling a bit drowsy myself, after that tedious parable.

MITCH: Sleep is good. That's when you get to dream.

HSVT: Duh! ...Since this interview is supposed to be about you, why don't you tell us a little more about your incredibly egotistical self...?

MITCH: Actually, I'd like to mention the name of the nearly famous comics and movie writer; Mark Verheiden once again, because he was nice enough to mention me when he was interviewed. I still have an old interview with Mark, when he was King Verheiden; known as the "Butcher of Millions" in that propaganda rag you worked for—DIE MANIC ZIRCONSTRUDLE or whatever.

HSVT: That's DIE MUNICH ZEITUNGSENTE, stickboy! —and it's the best DIPLOMACY newspaper that's ever been done! We've had such famous contributors as DAK and D. Jon Zimmerman!

MITCH: Yeah, yeah... (spoken in a sarcastically condescending voice). DAK (not the guy that has that electronics catalogue) and I collaborated on several projects, including the original "Lo! The Being from Planet X" story; the sequel of which appears in SURF SUMO #1.

## young artist named Wolfgang..."

### Catching some ancient air

From "Weekly World News" comes word that teen-agers in Egypt have been skateboarding down ancient pyramids after dark. At last report: at least 85 in jail, and dozens more in the hospitals because of skate-related injuries.

—From staff and wire reports

MITCH: I did the strip back in 1986, and it was printed on some T-shirts. Some teen-agers in Egypt must have seen the shirt, because it was reported in the WORLD WEEKLY NEWS that at least 85 of them went to jail for skateboarding down

ancient pyramids!

HSVT: Are you assuming responsibility for the whole mess??

MITCH: I'm responsible for only my own actions. Too many people make excuses, or try to blame others for their own unthinking actions. I think most of the world's problems are the result of blatant or ignorant irresponsibility on the part of so-called adults. The world is being destroyed by overpopulation, yet our society still glorifies baby-making and motherhood. There must be something more to aspire to than reproduction.

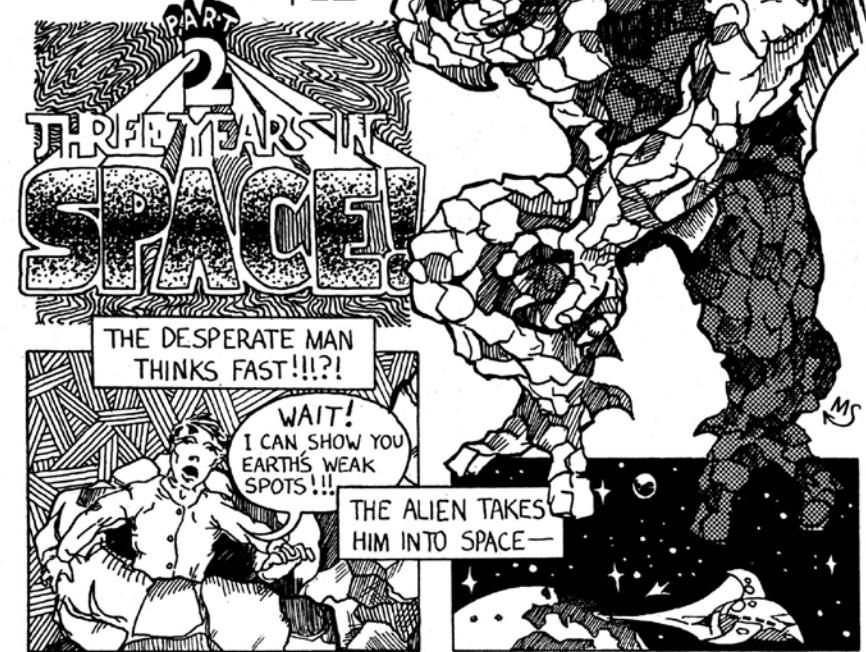
HSVT: —What about evil??

MITCH: Evil is evil. It is Evil's job to strike! EVIL STRIKES!!! ...in the second issue of SURF SUMO.

HSVT: Whew! —Less than halfway through the interview, and my attention is already beginning to wander... Oh well, I'll attempt to spice this up a little with more biting questions.

MITCH: You should give yourself more credit. Some of the questions you already asked really bit.

HSVT: Let's talk some more about your comic.... You seem to have some kind of fixation for pyramids. What about that little "Pyramid Surfers" strip that Surf Sumo finds in his archives?



## "...It was so serene and spacey."

**HSVT:** What else have you done with pyramids?

**MITCH:** Things you can't even imagine. They used to have a contest in these parts called the Slackwater Drift. I won it three times, by building various watercraft, and drifting down the Willamette River, from Corvallis to Albany. Some friends and I dressed as ancient Egyptians one year, and manned a small floating pyramid. The year after that we were Vikings, on a 45 foot craft called the RIVER DRAGON. The last time was the YELLOW SUBMARINE. It was dream come true, assuming Beanie, Blue Meanie, and Apple Bonker identities, and singing the famous song. I got to be Lennon, whose birthday falls one day before mine. Those times were a lot of fun... it was so serene and spacey. There was a real feeling of kaf, in the moments between the din of hundreds of partiers on the river, and those weird floating objects all around.

**HSVT:** What is the Shiny Beast of Thought supposed to be?

comic universe in the background of Frank Zappa's universe of statistical density.

**HSVT:** ...And Stare-Oids??

**MITCH:** If you've ever walked through the woods at night, you know that there are things... lurking behind the bushes, or up in the branches; just out of sight. Some of those things are called Stare-Oids; others are called Swoopers. In my comics, you actually get to see what they look like!

**HSVT:** But is that really a good reason to buy SURF SUMO #1?

**MITCH:** It's one of many really good reasons to buy SURF SUMO #1, published by Star Tiger, but I don't have time to list them all right now.

**HSVT:** I should have known better than to ask that. Who do you consider as influences in comics?

**MITCH:** I've done a few M.C. Escher-type things over

imitate anyone else's style, except for in an obvious parody... or a tribute, where the original artist is given full credit. I'll be glad to list some of the people whose work I respect, though.

Start with Kirby, who appeared to be as nice as he was talented.



**MITCH:** Captain Beefheart mentioned the Shiny Beast in some of his songs. I've tried giving it flesh, reincarnating it as a sort of protagonist for Surf Sumo. You may notice other references to music or musicians I like, mutated appropriately. If you listen, you'll hear cosmic echoes of my

the years, or what you might call experimental drawings imitating artists I've liked, for my own entertainment. But, what-ever stylistic influences I've had are not the result of any conscious effort by me—that is; I haven't tried to

Steranko was a mind-bender, and brought a lot of new approaches... but he really pissed me off when he stopped doing comics! Joe Kubert also seemed honest and straightforward. He published one of my

## There was a real feeling of kaf..."

letters in STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES #150, and he even took the time to drop me a personal note after I sent in some artwork that disappeared. Ditko ranks with the greatest, and you have to respect his consistent production over the years, but I wish he'd still do that really tight, intricate stuff, like in the old days. Carl Barks, Kane, Wood, Starlin, Wrightson, Neil Adams, Kaluta, P. Craig Russell, Keown, Arthur Adams, and Jim Lee. I also like Ogden Whitney, because he did HERBIE. I've written and partially drawn a fabulous new Herbie story, which brings the character into the present, but as yet I've been unable to convince the owner of his copyright to publish it—or give me permission to publish it. Oh yeah—I should include John Byrne on my list, even though I thought his version of the Fat Fury was anemic-looking.

1967 issue of ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN.

**HSVT:** Is there anyone else you'd like to say something positive about?

**MITCH:** Yeah, Dan Adkins and Wally Wood were the best inkers ever on Kirby. When I worked at Marvel, I got to meet Dan, who was also a heckuva nice guy. He gave me the original art from that two-page spread of a Zeppelin explosion from GIANT-SIZE DRACULA. Marie Severin helped me get some work as a colorist... I always liked her pencil work on those early issues of THE SUB-MARINER, and thought she should do more of it. Herb Trimpe was always friendly, and not full-of-himself; unlike some others I met at the famous Bullpen. Mike Esposito was a joy to work with—he did the art corrections on a lot of the

fun and be creative in my writing, instead of concentrating so much on punctuation, syntax, and all that other boring stuff that other teachers tried to drum into my head over the years. We were supposed to be three-quarters through reading THE SCARLET LETTER; except that I was faking it; just picking up the gist from class discussion. So, our assignment was to write our own ending for the book. When Mr. Martin saw my story, he said it was the best one, and even read it to all of his classes. Afterwards, the paper was



returned,

marked with a "B+". I got confused and upset when I saw some papers of other students; notably girls on the honor roll; and they had

"A's". I asked Mr. Martin about it, and he explained that the girls needed the "A's" to maintain their grade point averages, and he figured that was as good as they could do. He said, "Mitch, I know you can do better!"

**HSVT:** ...And what did that teach you?

**MITCH:** I guess that if you never have to struggle to reach your goals, and everything is just handed to you on a silver platter, then you won't get that ultimate feeling of accomplishment.

**HSVT:** I've always wanted to finish an interview by saying, "Amen". Unfortunately, we aren't done yet. You worked at Marvel way back in 1975. What else did you do at that time?

**HSVT:** What are your favorite comics of all time?

**MITCH:** Kubert's ENEMY ACE & TARZAN, HERBIE, STRANGE TALES, Kirby's original HULK & FANTASTIC FOUR, early SPIDERMAN, PLASTIC MAN, and many of those early sixties monster books from DC, Marvel, and ACG. I was a pretty big American Comics Group fan, and had a letter published in the August

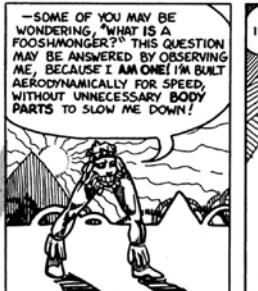
covers I adapted for the British weeklies. His son; I think his name was Mark; wanted to be a movie director—he was real crack-up. I thought he had a lot more creative potential than any of the other progenies who hung around. I have to mention Sallieup, who gave me my job at Marvel; and DAK, who shared his apartment with me in Flushing.

**HSVT:** I should insert some words here, just so this interview has some semblance of realism.

**MITCH:** One person who taught me a lot about the ways of the world was my eleventh-grade English teacher, Mr. Arthur Martin. He gave me the opportunity to have

## "Occasionally bitterness is appropriate,

### Culture Hero



**MITCH:** Back then, I shared an apartment in Flushing with DAK, and rode the subway for 45 minutes to get to work. I tried doing a lot of different things, but mostly worked on altering comic covers for the British weeklies as my regular job. I went to Neil Adams' studio one day, and got my picture taken for photo reference by Pat Broderick. He used the picture for the splash page of "The Rat Pack", which was in PHOENIX #3, from Atlas Comics. I was the tall thug in the background. In DEMON HUNTER #1, I did a bunch of last-minute emergency lettering for David Anthony Kraft. I tried to convince Larry Leiber that I could be a writer, but he didn't seem impressed by my samples. At Marvel, I colored "Inside the Mummy Case" for JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #16, and the cover of CRYPT OF SHADOWS #16. I did emergency paste-ups for Don McGregor in KILLRAVEN #30.

Don was a little volcano. He used to jump up on the desk, erupting with rant and rave, during editor's meetings. I could never bring myself to be that squeaky of a wheel, or maybe they would have paid more attention to me, too. I have a soft spot for Man-Wolf, because I got to

give a lot of input to DAK, who was writing it. The splash page of CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #36 was my ideal "Lady Grinning Soul!", a story that was supposed to appear, but never quite made it into GIANT-SIZE DRACULA #6, was ghost-written by me.

**HSVT:** So, in other words, you've done a ton of uncredited work. I suppose that is your excuse for being so bitter. Did you do anything in that era that anyone might have seen or heard of?

**MITCH:** Sure. I came back to Oregon, and did a weekly strip for my college newspaper, called CULTURE HERO. I was going through some tough emotional times then, and I began expressing my feelings more in my artwork. Occasionally, bitterness is appropriate, such as for an ingredient in beer... or tears cried into beer.

**HSVT:** You're breaking my heart! Also, making me thirsty.



MESSAGE GOES HERE.

## such as for an ingredient in beer..."

**MITCH:** I tend to have that kind of effect on myself. **Weird Al Yankovic**, might be thirsty for the dynamite new song idea I have, in case I ever get to meet him. I promise I will split the royalties with Denise.

**HSVT:** Who's Denise?

**MITCH:** She's an old nursery friend of the family.

**HSVT:** Quite the little word-coiner, aren't we? We'll let it go at that. I'll

give you this opportunity to pitch anything you forgot.

**MITCH:** Why thank you. I have fifty full-color Mantis illustrations I did for an unpublished coffee table book called MANTHOLOGY. It's a collaboration with my friend, Steve Rothermund, who came up with a lot of the concepts, and wrote some verse. We haven't found a publisher for it as yet.

**HSVT:** Well gosh; you just haven't

had any luck, have you?

**MITCH:** Oh, I don't know... I think SURF SUMO is a pretty big break, and Star Tiger deserves the credit for giving me this opportunity!

**HSVT:** So; why aren't there more big guns, violence, and bare butts in your comic?

**MITCH:** I guess I must be more mature than some of those other comic book guys.

**HSVT:** Amen. (sarcasm)

