

BAMF Podcast -- Bulletproof Blues 2012-02-08

Mike Lafferty: Hey folks, thanks for tuning in to another episode of "The BAMF Podcast." I am your host, Mike Lafferty. With me tonight I have occasional co-host and hell of a nice guy, Dan Houser.

Dan Houser: Hey everybody, how is it going?

Mike: Dan, welcome back to the podcast. It's always a pleasure to have you.

Dan: Hey, great to be back.

Mike: I understand that in addition to your notable talents as an artist and a game designer and an all-around great guy, you're going to be an actor here sometime soon.

Dan: Oh, that's right. Yeah, I'm actually going to be in a production locally here of "Avenue Q."

Mike: Very nice.

Dan: Playing Brian, an overweight, out of work, failed comedian. Life imitating art? You be the judge. Come on down to The Janesville Performing Arts Center and take a look.

Mike: What nights was that going to be?

Dan: March 24th and 25th and 30th and 31st.

Mike: OK, so coming up very soon. Looking forward to that. Also joining us this evening is Brandon Blackmoor. How are you doing, sir?

Brandon Blackmoor: I'm spectacular.

Mike: This is your first time on the podcast. Thank you very much for joining us tonight.

Brandon: Thank you for having me.

Mike: I have seen your name around RPG Net and various other forums just like forever but I was never completely clear on who you were, what you did. Can you give us a quick, two by five card of your resume?

Brandon: Bio?

Mike: Yeah.

Brandon: Mainly because I'm nobody very important, I haven't done very much. But I've been around forever. [laughter]

Brandon: I had a small press gaming company in the early 1990's called Blackgate Publishing. We put out a big game called Legacy which is about immortals who roamed the earth and fought each other with swords. It was a fun game; it was a product of its time. I'm still proud of it to this day, although I kind of cringe when I look at it. Ah, what are you going to do?

Mike: It would be a good product to have a Queen soundtrack playing in the background while you were playing.

Brandon: It never occurred to me, but now that you mention it... [laughter]

... I bet you're right. Actually, Battlefield Press has licensed that from me to revamp the mechanics, bring it into the 21st century and maybe give it some new art and put that out. Jon is a good man to do that.

Mike: Jonathan Thompson, he's a hell of a guy.

Brandon: Jon is a good man to do that. I'm not really involved with the revamp, other than I like a mentor, "Jor-El" capacity. But I wish them the best of luck with it.

Mike: [indecipherable 02:33] fits a crystal into his ice palace there in Alabama. I got an image of you... I'm just amusing myself with this one. Gentleman, I'm sorry.

Brandon: It's OK.

Mike: I heard your reference, I went after it whole hog and it just wasn't working? So let's move on.

Dan: Marlon Brandon...

Brandon: Marlon Brando.

Dan: Brandon.

Brandon: My son! Ah! Don't make it a dice pool, you don't want to do that. [laughter]

Mike: I forgot that my real role and Dan's on the podcast is to draw straight lines; punch lines.

Brandon: So there was Blackgate, we did that in the early 90's. That lost money so they shut that down and just did gaming stuff for the fun of it for the next 15, 20 years. I did a game called "Under the Broken Moon," which was a Thundarr the Barbarian role playing game.

Mike: Ook-la! Kee-la! We ride!

Dan: Ariel! Ook-la! Ride! Demon dogs!

Brandon: I'm a huge Thundarr the Barbarian fan.

Mike: I'm a huge Alex Toth fan.

Brandon: That's interesting.

Mike: [chuckles]

Brandon: I'm also a fan of basically anything. Rock 'n' Roll. I love animation, and I love drawing. [audio skips]

Mike: ...run that out there.

Brandon: Rock 'n' Roll's really interesting. Nelvana, the Canadian company that made that, they had a choice between doing that and doing Heavy Metal. [laughs] So they said, "We'd rather work on our own thing, rather than an adaptation of somebody else's thing." Which is why nowadays no one's ever heard of Heavy Metal, but everybody knows Rock 'n' Rule.

Dan: [indecipherable 04:25 Fire and Ice?]

Brandon: I'm sorry, what?

Dan: Fire and Ice, yeah.

Mike: What's the guy's name, Bakshi?

Brandon: Yep, Ralph Bakshi.

Mike: And looks like some cursory attention from Frank Frazetta as well on that.

Dan: Mm-hmm, on the cover.

Brandon: Yeah, pretty basic. [laughter]

Brandon: Let's see what else is going on. Oh, I've been maintaining some very little-known websites for role-playing game type activities -- RPG Library, PPEM News -- which, there's a handful of people using them. They're not RPGnet by any means.

Mike: Why don't you give us the URLs?

Brandon: Rpglibrary.org, spelled R-P-G library dot org. PBEM News, which is P-B-E-M-N-E-W-S dot org. But actually, if you go to RPG Library, PPEM News is right there.

Mike: OK, well, cool.

Brandon: On RPG Library we've got a section for open gaming stuff. D20 RSD, Jazz, which is a game I worked on, open B6, some Traveler stuff that's been opened, things like that. It's a work in progress. That's the kind of stuff I've been working on for the last two decades.

Mike: OK, cool, cool, cool. We have you on tonight, because you were in a game.

Brandon: Yes! I have not been in a commercial arena, as far as game publishing goes, for a very, very long time, since before the world wide web, how it's changed everything. That's before the popularity of PDFs as a delivery medium. I'm kind of a stranger in a strange land, trying to do a commercial thing again. Hope that I can just give people something that they have fun playing. It's really different, because when you're just doing stuff for the fun of it, yourself, and you just put it out there, it's free! If somebody else wants to play it, they have fun with it, that's outstanding. If they don't, eh, life goes on. It's not like they paid anything for it.

But when you're asking people to fork over four bucks, or five bucks for something, you kind of have to think, "OK, is this going to be at least as much fun as a Big Mac and fries?" That's really my goal. If I can meet the expectation of a lunch at McDonald's, and they can walk away at least that satisfied, I've succeeded. So, that's my goal.

Mike: Well, all right. [mumbles] I can't say your title of your game, man! I'm sorry. "Bullet Proof Blues" is coming out this month, right? February of 2012? Brandon The plan is to release the PDF on DT RPG, DriveThru RPG, February 25th at MystiCon in Roanoke, Virginia, where I'm going to be a game guest! Fun fact, they lined me up as a game guest before I decided to come out with the game that weekend. Just a synchronicity kind of thing. Mr. Dan Houser, doing your art?

Dan: Yes, some of it, most of it, nearly all of it, in fact.

Brandon: Fun story behind that, I had originally not intended to do any art. I didn't want to pay for it, basically. Being the horrible, cheapskate miser that I am. I talked to Storen Cook, whose art I love, like, "Do you have something you've already drawn?" I know Storen has a depository of stuff that he's already drawn, that he makes available at very reasonable rates. You don't get any rights to it, or anything, but you can use it. He sent me a couple of things. I was like, "Hey, that's not bad. How much would that be?" and he's like "Oh, this much." I was, you know, "I'm going to do it". Bought a piece of art for the cover. It's not exactly appropriate for the game, but it's close, and it looks awesome.

That was going to be it. The interior was going to be text, walls and walls of text. Page after page of black and white letters. I was talking to the RPG brain trust on Facebook. Which I just stumbled across one day.

Mike: Which is maintained by my friend Seth Worthington.

Brandon: An excellent fellow.

Mike: He really is. He's a hell of a guy. He saved a dude from drowning. Anyway, go ahead.

Brandon: Really, seriously?

Mike: I'm just making that shit up. I have no idea.

Brandon: See, I could have bought it. I would have bought it, completely. Then people are like, "What is your stuff? What are you working on?" So I was like, "Oh, well I'm working on this thing, and it's going to be like this. Probably not have any art in it." I was thinking, if, after the first edition comes out, and people like it, there's generally positive reception. Maybe do a Kickstarter for the art. All the money from the Kickstarter will just go to some artist, somewhere.

Then, Dan Houser said, "What?"

Dan: Well, yeah. Superheroes without art. That kind of baffled me. The first thing you're going to get is people going, "I can't wait for there to be art. I'll put money into the Kickstarter." Then you'll have a book that you laid out and paid for. Then somebody will come along and say, "Well, I'm not going to buy the book. That sounds like a great idea. But here's what I'll do, I'll give to the Kickstarter." Rather than start from a point of needing art, I just said, "What are your needs for art?"

Brandon: He said, "My needs are copious."

Mike: Full color photo realistic illustrations on every page. [laughter]

Dan: So, I said then, "Let me introduce you to my friend Storen Cook." But he already knew Storen. I was like, "Well, if you can handle interior style, RPG animation style. A little bit more rendered than my icon stuff. I can get that out for you no problem."

Brandon: I was skeptical. Because, frankly, had I planned to have art, I would have initiated that conversation in October, rather than in January. Because I've worked with artists before, on previous projects. It's not a "Get it to me by the end of the week" kind of proposition. It's art, it takes months. Months and months and months. Many rounds of approvals and denials, and criticisms. It's blood, art is blood. That's why it costs so much.

Dan: There are a lot of knives involved.

Brandon: And he end, apparently he said "Yeah I can have it by then" [laughs] . So yeah.

Mike: There you go. That's Dan, that's how he rolls.

Dan: That's the thing two I do believe that it is art, 100 percent. Well, I also believe that I'm not only investing my ego into what I'm doing, they're investing their money into me providing a product. A long as I don't go "Oho no he hated that position" or "Oh no you think the anatomy is" -- and this is the word he used -- "screwy". Then I'd go "Nope, he's right. I need to fix that," and then I'll fix it. And I mean there is one character right now that I'm so getting the hang of for him. But to my credit I understand that it's one of the signature characters of the actual game. So I've gone through two different poses with two different body frame types. And now that I'm locked into it I think the newest one that Brandon's going to see is going to blow his socks off. So I'm not worried about that. And then we'll go on to easier stuff like guys who are made of thorns, and [laughter] giant energy guys. I cant wait for the guys who are basically all shadows, which was really

cool.

Mike: So, you're drawing this right now even as we speak?

Dan: Yeah, actually. I took a break. I actually have my Wacom tablet here to draw as soon as we're done with this conversation now.

Mike: Is that what you call it, a Wha -com? I've been calling it a Way-com.

Dan: OK.

Mike: I don't know. I've heard it called both.

Dan: Like the tablet.

Mike: Like Whack-com, like Whack-a-mole.

Brandon: There you go. Did I mention that break? I lost like five years of my life, because of that break. Because like "I haven't heard from Dan, should I email him? No, no, he's an artist don't bother him, you'll disrupt his process." So, It's all has been very stressful on my part.

Dan: Yeah he took a little break, and I've been still working so, just don't worry about it. The second it hits your desk just say yes or no. As soon as you say no it goes back into the machine, to be tweaked and worked, and fixed. That's why I'm only showing you ink [indecipherable 12:48] , so that when I get colors done I can easily just pour those on and were all set.

Brandon: That's cool. In all seriousness, I was like "Yeah I think what we you're saying is great. Can you do other styles of work? Other than the very animated cartoon style that I've seen. Most of it stuff done as icons, like the..."

Dan: No [laughter] burning tire round my neck, like a Jamaican junta. I've been cursed with this. Can you do anything other than icons? Yeah, of course I can. Yes, I really, really can.

Brandon: So I was like, "Prove it." [laughter] that's what I said.

Dan: [crosstalk 13:32] what I did. One of the most visually...

Brandon: It's not like I was asking for full color. Like "What can you do with this?" This was one of the more visually complex action scenes that I had in mind. And it was very, very close to what I wanted and that was good enough for me. So, hey, and yeah.

Dan: And I'm redoing that one as well. Actually, Brandon doesn't understand it he's a perfect kind of person to work for, for me. Because he goes, that's sort of what I want. That's not what I want to hear. So, I'll keep working at it until it's, "Oh, that's great, that's good". I've even gotten a couple of, "That's perfect." Like the blue shift one came out just right the second one, so I was happy with that. Whenever I hear I'm right from Brandon, it might as well be a fantastic from Mike Lafferty.

Mike: [mimics trumpet] Ta ta-ta tah! What are you saying, Dan?

Dan: I'm just saying, Mike, that Brandon isn't very emotional.

Mike: Oh, OK. Well, all right.

Dan: Whereas Mike is effusive with praise, Brandon, he holds it back like a stern master with a dangling wretched carrot for the donkey. A lot of times he lets the donkey smell the carrot. Whereas Mike will, at the end of a hard day, give the donkey a bushel of carrots. You know what you get for that, Mike? Fat donkeys. [laughs]

Brandon: The story behind that, the secret reason behind that, is I'm usually looking at these things on my phone. And "nice" is shorter than "that's great." [laughter] It's like, "I'm not paying text fees for this..." [audio skips]

Mike: ...on the phone?

Brandon: Yes, that's fine.

Mike: You guys had mentioned that you were drawing a signature character in this setting. We haven't talked about the setting at all, yet. Can you tell us a little about the signature character image that you're working on right now?

Dan: I can tell you about two of them. There are three primary characters that Brandon made clear, and what was refreshing was that they're all female.

Mike: OK.

Dan: The first one is Manticore, which is an analog... If I get this wrong, Brandon, slap me. It's a female version of Tony Stark, the Rocketeer, and James Bond?

Brandon: That's close. I actually pictured her more as a cross between Tony Stark, Buckaroo Banzai, and Jennifer Lopez.

Dan: Gotcha.

Brandon: She's a doctor, a lawyer, a movie star -- she's an astronaut! -- and she built your armor.

Dan: So, the female Buckaroo Banzai mixed with Tony Stark.

Brandon: Yeah, basically.

Dan: And a nice ass. And she... [audio skips]

Brandon: ...a famous pop star. primarily in Japan and China. She's trying to segue out of that, because now she's approaching 30 and that's a younger woman's game. She's being more serious now, focusing on science and the business and stuff like that.

Mike: That's understandable. It's hard to be a pop star. I know I had to give it up after a

certain point.

Dan: You can move on, otherwise you'll be... [crosstalk 16:44]

Brandon: So that's Manticore, who's one of the signature characters.

Mike: You said you had three signature characters.

Brandon: There's Zero-K, who is a cryo-kinetic character. Beyond that I know she's curvaceous and sassy. [laughter] Beyond that I don't know. I don't have a real character idea of what she does. I didn't really look at her character sheet too in-depth yet.

Mike: You said character sheet. Let's talk about the system a little bit.

Brandon: All right.

Mike: Mr. Blackmoor, give me the elevator pitch for the system. Why is it going to rock my socks?

Brandon: Wow. All right. [laughs] Well, it's just so hard. There are so many great superior games out there now. It's really hard for me to come up with a compelling reason why anybody should buy this one. [crosstalk 17:45]

Brandon: For me, I'll tell you why I like it. That's really all I can do. If somebody else likes it, that's great; and if they don't, there are lots of other games to pick from. No hard feelings.

Mike: What moved you? Because I mean writing a game is a long, lonely, arduous process. What made you do all that blood, sweat and tears?

Brandon: Because there wasn't anything quite what I wanted.

Mike: And what did you want?

Brandon: I want enough detail so that if I reasonably come and an occurrence came up, that I or some G.M. somewhere wouldn't make a judgment call every single time on reasonably common things. Like how far can I throw a car? I'm this strong, how far can I throw a car? So some very basic stuff. I've got this much power in my fire flight form. How fast is that? Is it faster than a jet plane? Is it faster than a car? How fast is that? Things like that. Not rocket science by any means. There are several games that are at the very, very, fast and loose narrative, you're as fast as the story needs you to be arena. Then there's at the other end, you've got games that are very detailed as far as that kind of thing goes. More detailed than Bulletproof Blues is. Mutants and Masterminds is a perfect example, there's lots and lots of detail there. As much as you want. It's a great game, I've played it, it's an awesome game, I love it. And then past that there are games like Champions which are even more detailed.

In between that range between the Bash Icons level and Mutants and Masterminds level, I wanted something a little bit crunchier than the Icons level but not as crunchy as Mutants

and Masterminds. Something faster to play, not as complex or time consuming to do conflict resolution, but with more tools to provide to swing the character around and have a handle on what kind of interactions characters can do with each other and with the world, then you typically get with the very minimalist level superhero games.

It's weird, I've actually been working on this since before either of the games I'm using as examples were written. It just so happens that it falls in that spot between them.

Dan: You've been writing this game since before Mutants and Masterminds came out?

Brandon: Oh hell yeah. A long time ago. You talked about it's an ordeal writing a game, what caused you to do it? Part of the reason I've been working on it so long is because it is an ordeal. I'll work on it for a while, I'll play test a few games, and then go back to whatever else is the next closest approximation that's already published. For the longest time that was Champions. Huge Champions fan for a long, long time. Like 20 years. The very earliest version was very heavily influenced by Champions. It was much, much simpler. Like one tenth as complicated as Champions was. Still, the underlying mechanical similarities were there. That was called Heroine, which was very chic at the time. Then after a while Mutants and Masterminds...

Dan: Heroine is so passe.

Brandon: The '90s are over man. The dream of the '90s is alive, in Portland. Then Mutants and Masterminds came around and I was like, "Yes this is so awesome, this is much closer to what I actually want to play." So I got all my friends to covert to Mutants and Masterminds. Converted our superhero world we were playing with to Mutants and Masterminds. Played that for a while. Still tinkered with what is currently Bulletproof Blues. At that time it was called Jazz, because Heroine seemed a little, unnecessarily provocative a name. I thought how about Jazz. It mixes a bunch of different sources, Over the Edge, Rises, and things like that. It's inspiration. Not just, you know, copy and paste. And Jazz, it kind of has the spirit of it. Jazz is a very, very free-flowing, very description-based.

You'd have fire elemental mastery as a description thing and you'd have a number assigned to that. And pretty much anything you did with that would be based on that number. It's similar to.. if you had a private investigator or millionaire playboy. Things like that. There'd be numbers attached to all that stuff. And that was what Jazz was. And again, we'd run that from time to time. We ran a really good fantasy games that was attached to that for a while. That was a lot of fun. And, but, the nature of it was that I was the only person who could run it because it was based on so many assumptions that were simply in my head and nowhere else. So time went on, and, a couple of friends of mine, Eric Closentzen and Lloyd Montgomery, they were running Jazz for a while. One guy was using it for a Twilight 2000-style game. And Eric was running it for a -- it's complicated -- everybody's dead and during the afterlife and good and evil are fighting over limbo. Based on some movie. And he's running a game about using Jazz for that. And they both added in attributes, you know, brawn, agility, reason, perception. Because they wanted to have a set list of things that they could compare all characters with. And the people spoke. So I liked Jazz the way it was, so then I split that off into something

else which had more set character descriptors; brawn, agility, reason, so forth. That I wanted to kind of to play off the name Jazz, so I called it Blues. Then when I actually decided to sell it at something, I thought it needed a more distinctively superhero-ey sounding name than just Blues so I tried to think of something alliterative, so I picked bulletproof, and that's how I got Bulletproof Blues.

Mike: Alright, so talking about abilities and attributes, so what are the attributes for Bulletproof Blues?

Brandon: I will tell you. This was a very long and arduous process picking these. I actually wanted six and we actually have eight because I couldn't see a reasonable way to cut it down anymore. Brawn, agility, reason, perception, will power, prowess, accuracy, and endurance.

Mike: OK.

Brandon: Here's that goes. Brawn -- how strong you are. Agility -- how agile, flexible you are. Reason -- your ability to analyze information and draw conclusions. Perception -- your awareness of your surroundings, your intuition, your understanding of other people, what makes you tick. Will power -- is your determination, your focus, strength of personality. Prowess is hand to hand fighting ability. Accuracy is your ability to hit stuff at range. I specifically wanted to divorce that from agility because coming statistically from a champion's background, high dex characters rule on Champions. It became a trend in any long term champion's player their characters have gratuitous amounts of high dex. And I really wanted to get away from that because not everybody who's really good with a gun can do back flips on a balance beam. They shouldn't necessarily be the same thing. So you've got prowess, you've got accuracy and you've got endurance, which is basically how badly beaten you can get before you can go unconscious.

Mike: OK. Understood. That's your constitution. OK. You mentioned you did some playtesting. Do you have any insightful anecdotes about the experience, that show what the game's like?

Brandon: It's a hard thing to describe, because -- I don't know if this is true, it personally is true for me -- the things that I personally found the most fun make no sense to people who weren't there, because it's all based on in-jokes, and what you know about the other characters, and the characters' history. But I can give you something I thought was a lot of fun. The first time a character called Nexus met a character called Paradox -- Nexus is, basically, a corporate superhero, he was actually grown in a vat. He's actually Nexus 17, although he doesn't know that. He thinks he was born and adopted by the Nexus Corporation, and raised to be this great hero and corporate spokesman for the Nexus Corporation, but, in fact, he was grown in a vat.

He's got issues, but he's, essentially, fundamentally, a nice guy, because he was raised to be that way in order to present the corporation in a positive light. He has not met a whole lot of other superheroes. Part of the basic premise of this setting is there are not a lot of superheroes. They are fairly few and far between, and the ones that do exist, probably two thirds of those don't tell anybody.

They've got superbrains, so they go into banking. They've got superspeed, so they become thieves. Yes, things like that, because they are super tough, so they become a stuntman, that kind of thing. And they don't tell anybody they're actually bulletproof. There's a lot of prejudice and fear against people who can, oh, say, push a building over.

There are some very high-profile superheroes and there are some very high-profile supervillains, but, for the most part, the world is distrustful of all of them. And there's some more backstory to that, but I won't get into it.

So, Nexus, who's, actually, a very high-profile positive role model, corporate spokesman-type superhero, he's not yet met a lot of other people like him, basically because he's been so sheltered. Paradox, she's a time manipulator who first got her powers back in World War II. It's a long story, it has to do with a supervillain called Tick-Tock Man, but, as an accident, she got time manipulation powers. Part of that is that she, basically, doesn't age anymore, and she can drop copies of herself from other time streams.

Lava pygmies are attacking Chicago. They've tunneled up into Chicago, they're making a mess, there's lava everywhere. This sounds very wacky, but, in fact, they burn people alive, and it's, actually, pretty horrific. So Nexus comes on the scene, he's got electrical manipulation powers, and he's trying to shock the lava pygmies, and it's not having a whole lot of effect.

And Paradox is there, and she's thinking, well, these guys are fire and made of lava, I'll get a fire hose from the office building and reel it out. She pulls copies of herself from the future, so there's three of herself there, and she's hosing down lava pygmies, who harden and can't move when they're soaked like that, and then they cool off.

After a while of this, Nexus is having very little effect on the lava pygmies. Paradox can only hose down a couple at a time, but is slowly making progress. Nexus, over his earpiece, from his handling team, they tell him that, oh, we're picking up something on the cameras, there's a woman over there who's spraying them down, and that seems to be working.

See if you can somehow go by her and when the cameras are on her try to get in with that. He goes over there and he uses his electrical powers on the pygmies who are standing in the water. He's like: "Hey, they are all standing in the water; we'll execute all of them at the same time!" And he spent a plot point to make that really effective, because a plot point is, the same thing you see in a dozen other games. What do they call it in Masterminds? Basically it lets you break the rules, do something extra.

Mike: That's hero points.

Brandon: Hero Points, thank you.

Mike: Lets you exercise narrative control

Brandon: There you go! So he fries a bunch, a lot of pygmies, spends a plot point, and

because they are standing in the water, the water works really well on them, because they are all grounded and all that. Unfortunately, so is she.

Mike: Ohhh.

Brandon: So he actually kills two of Paradox. [laughing] So that was pretty funny [laughing] . But one of her is alive, the one that's up by the building next to the big wheel that turns the water on. She wasn't standing in the water. But she was so mad that he electrocuted the other two of her. And the way that power works in Bulletproof Blues is whichever of your copies is still left, that's the "real" one. So the character did not actually lose anything.

Mike: She knows, for sure, she is going to die at some point in the future.

Brandon: At some point. So all of her sister duplicates and you're pretty sure that there's a good chance, at that moment...the thing is, there are alternate timelines.

Mike: OK, so alright, alright. It's an inter-dimensional kind of thing.

Brandon: Yeah, at least two of them had the same fate. It's a conceit of her particular flavor of duplication, she can see multiple timelines.

Mike: Mm-hmm.

Brandon: And she pulls them from timelines that are unlikely. So she is actually unlikely to be executed later on, at least in that way. The fun thing about that, that he electrocuted two of her right there, the next four or five games, she would not let him forget that. Every time something came up she is really mean to him. "Watch out, watch out, he has a tendency to electrocute his teammates." Things like that. Actually you had to be there.

Mike: Good running joke, Alright, cool. So we are at layout right now, the art still being produced, where are we at now?

Brandon: Art's being produced, mechanics and game system and various fluff is being finalized. I'm actually a wiz at layout.

Mike: Really?

Brandon: Layout will take like a day.

Mike: Really?

Brandon: Yeah

Mike: Do you accept commissions? Are you looking for work?

Brandon: No. [laughs]

Mike: God damn it, alright.

Brandon: I don't particularly enjoy layout, I'm just really good at it. [laughs]

Dan: That's how I am with killing guys. I had to walk away.

Brandon: Somebody has to deal with that.

Mike: Cool, cool. Alright, so hey, games coming out. What's your release date again?

Brandon: February 25th, Mysticon, Roanoke, VA.

Mike: So that is 18 days from now.

Brandon: That's the plan now, if that actually happens. As life throws you lemons, you make lemonade. We just bought a house. I'm actually in the middle of moving.

Mike: So, you're surrounded by boxes and stuff right now as we speak?

Brandon: I am surrounded by boxes as we speak, they're piled up behind me. I'm going to be really, really busy moving, so there is a possibility that it actually won't be ready Feb. 25th, but I maintain optimism. Optimism in the face of adversity.

Mike: You've been play testing this game for how long now? Five years?

Brandon: The current version, six to eight months.

Mike: OK, cool, cool.

Brandon: A lot of the underlying stuff has been play tested for years and years, and years.

Mike: OK, very nice.

Brandon: It's mainly been like my home brew tinker system. We'll bring it out, play a campaign using it, put it away and not touch it again for a year.

Mike: OK, Bulletproof Blues will be out end of February, beginning of March maybe, depending on how the move goes. Cover by Storen Hook, interior art by our friend Dan Houser.

Brandon: It will be PDF initially, but I do plan to support the print on demand thing that [indecipherable 34:05] RPG does, that will be later because there are some layout changes that need to be done for that, to support that right. I've been talking to Angus Abramson over at Chronicle City European print distribution. So, that's pretty cool.

Mike: We're trying to get Angus on the podcast, if you happen to talk to him, mention that.

Brandon: I will mention it to him next time I talk to him

Mike: Tell him about the lovely gift bags that we send to all our podcast guests.

Dan: Yes, they're cleverly disguised as little envelopes full of coupons. I haven't thrown yours out already, I'm just saying, you have to open all your mail. [laughter]

Dan: There's some cheese in there, there's one bag of American cheese.

Mike: Yes, no doubt.

Dan: It looked like a free sample of dishwashing detergent but it ended up being a really nice D20.

Mike: That's because we care here at BAMF podcast. You keep your eyes out for that.

Dan: Or, we'll poke them out. See, I always go one step too far, I have a problem.

Mike: I was going to try to save you on that one, then I realized eye poking was not funny. Sorry, Dan.

Dan: How about the Three Stooges, my friend?

Mike: Oh.

Dan: Hey, they're making a new one.

Mike: I know.

Dan: Have you seen the trailer for that?

Mike: Yes, I think that having Larry David as a nun made it OK for me then. OK then, this will be as goofy as I want it to be.

Brandon: Larry David?

Mike: They got Larry David to play Sister Mary Mengele.

Brandon: That's pretty cool.

Dan: Your dog is incredibly audible.

Brandon: Oh sorry.

Dan: The dog said audibly said, "no, no, no."

Brandon: Have you guys been able to hear her all podcast?

Mike: No, not at all just now.

Brandon: Just now.

Mike: Just since I joke failed. I wanted you to fail instead of crickets; a dog pitifully whining, that is worse than crickets my friend.

Brandon: Just for the listeners out there, my dog just had surgery today. She still kind of tripping on the anesthesia. She had several tooth extractions, and some lumps removed. It's kind of a thing. If you've listened to the podcast for awhile, you've heard her barking in the background at various times. That's what's going on there.

Mike: We have covered Bulletproof Blues pretty well. Anything else you want to comment on that, before we call it a podcast?

Dan: Yes. When I start doing colors for pictures, I'll start a thread at RPGnet, so you can get an idea. Or, Brandon, you can put up the cover, and I'll start doing art, underneath the first post. In the ads, announcements section, on RPGnet.

Brandon: I approve of this plan.

Dan: Cool. You can even send me a copy of the cover, and I can put it up there. Do you have a finished copy? I've seen the art. I don't know if you have a finalized, cover version of that art, though.

Brandon: Yes. I do have a finalized, cover version of art. Wait, what did I say? I do have a final, what I hope to be the final, version of the cover.

Dan: Very good. Send it to me. I'll start up a thread. Then everyone can ask questions. Then I'll grab Brandon by the back of the neck, and say, "Brandon, answer these questions, so people can get questions answered."

Brandon: But I want to be mysterious. Actually, once the game comes out, I actually have a plan.

Dan: Speaking as an artist, I love the plans.

Brandon: Do you want to hear post release things? Or do you want to not do that? Yes, talk! Yes man, for god's sake!

Mike: Yes please, tell us.

Brandon: Well, here's the plan, after the game comes out. I've kind of touched on the setting. The setting in the basic book, will be likely, implicit. It'll be things you find in the character's back story, or in the examples, stuff like that. There are two main reasons for this. One, writing setting material is time consuming, and I want to go ahead and get the book out. Two is, I want the basic rulebook to be cheap. If it's a 300 page book, with 150 pages of setting stuff, it's not going to be cheap. I wanted the basic book to be like \$4.95, cover price, for the PDF. Short, and playable, something people could pick up.

The setting stuff in that is going to be, largely, implicit. If it becomes somewhat popular, people want to hear more. Come out with a setting book with more NPCs, more heroes and villains, and things. More about the default setting, and the history of it, that kind of thing. Hopefully people will like that.

Also talking to some people who have done supplements for other game systems --

ICONS, Mutants and Masterminds, and so forth -- on adapting works that they've already done to Bulletproof Blues. So that people will have ready made adventure source material, that they can use. That's kind of the plan with that.

Mike: Do you want to drop any names? Or are we still in negotiations for that stuff?

Brandon: It's probably best to just wait and see.

Mike: OK, cool.

Brandon: I can't promise any of it will come through at all. I've talked to people, and they've expressed tentative interest. They're probably going to wait and see if the game sucks or not. It won't suck! They'll all be thrilled, so everything will work out great. However, after it actually comes out, I'm going to have a contest. The imprint of the book is Kalos Comics, and the conceit of the cover is that it's actually the cover of a comic book. It's like "still only \$4.95! Kalos Comics." Marvel has Captain Marvel, or "Mar-Vell", depending how you want to pronounce it. I thought it'd be pretty cool to have Captain Kalos for the game system. Because there's not anybody like that. It's purely a logo. I'm going to sponsor "make up Captain Kalos" once there's actually a game people can use to make Captain Kalos up with.

I will pick the one I like best, and whoever wins that will get a gift certificate or credit, or whatever, at Profantasy Software, the people who do Camping Cryptography. Which has nothing to do with superheroes but it's cool software, so what the heck. It's a prize.

Dan: I'll send them one of the BAMF Podcast gift baskets.

Brandon: That would be awesome too.

Dan: Consider it done.

Brandon: The cheese makes an excellent letter opener.

Dan: [laughs] Yes it does.

Mike: Cool. So your game company is called Kalos?

Brandon: Yes. K-A-L-O-S. Kalos Comics.

Mike: OK, cool. I didn't know that. That's good information. You're set up at RPGnow so if folks want to pick up the game, say in 18 days when it goes live, RPGnow, Kalos Games, Kalos Comics, then that's where you find it.

Brandon: That is correct.

Mike: OK.

Brandon: And eventually it'll be carried in Europe via Chronicle City.

Man 1: OK. OK. Is Chronicle City doing any American distribution or is that just over

the pond?

Brandon: The plan is that they'll handle European and anybody who wants in the U.S. we'll just do a print-on-demand through DriveThruRPG. However, the licensing with DriveThruRPG, you can either be exclusive or non-exclusive, and I'm kind of a hedge-your-bets kind of a guy, so it's not exclusive. I can sell it through other people if I want. If Chronicle City has the means and desire to sell print versions in the U.S. they are perfectly capable of doing so.

Mike: OK. Cool, cool. Beautiful. Alrighty then.

Brandon: We'll see how their version compares to the print-on-demand version from DriveThruRPG too.

Mike: Now that pretzels Let us know how that goes for you, because I've had a lot of publishers tell me they've had some difficulty getting approvals with the RPGnow POD stuff.

Brandon: Hmm. Interesting. We shall see.

Mike: OK. Cool. Cool. Anything else we want to mention?

Dan: I hope your dog feels better.

Mike: Yeah, definitely. Hope your dog's feeling good.

Brandon: Yeah, we're sending her good thoughts, feeding her painkillers, so hopefully one of the two will work. Dan, anything else you want to pimp?

Dan: Yeah. Shortly after the release of Bulletproof Blues you'll be seeing your copies of Hero Pack three in your mailbox. Folks out there waiting for more Hero Pack three news, you just got it. Keep your ear to the ground for that. Some time after that will be Team Up and some time after that will be the omnibus, which will have a bunch of adventures. More solid than that I couldn't give you.

Mike: Yep, fair enough. We know how things can slide around with Icon's releases. All right, cool, cool. All right guys, I want to thank you very much for your time. I know Brandon you're moving right now, so I know your life is chaotic. Dan, I know you're busy with rehearsals and everything else you're doing.

Dan: A little busy. But we're still plugging away, and always available if you ask me ahead of time.

Mike: Cool, cool. All right guys, thanks a lot, and to our listeners, thanks for tuning in, and we'll catch you next time on the BAMF Podcast.

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