

Day Cho
Underberg-Goode
DIG6432
April 11, 2023

1961 - All-American hero Patriot sacrifices himself to save the world while thwarting the alien overlord Cerebrus' invasion.

1945 - Vampiric noir vigilante Shade Wilson succumbs to his wounds after battling and killing the legendary monster hunter Abel von Dirge.

3000 BC - Queen Atlantea stops her treacherous sister Princess Scylla's failed military coup, but not before the traitor triggers an explosion from her pendant that obliterates them both.

The year is 1986. Military governments rule the galaxies with an iron fist, vying for control over different territories across various moons and planets, including Earth. In America, New York harbors an underground research lab conducting experiments on various subjects in order to develop the ultimate weapon that will turn the tide of battle for intergalactic domination. Research Experiment X (REX), an extraterrestrial youth held captive since 1936 after crash landing on Earth as an infant, awakens from his Patriot simulation and breaks free, wreaking havoc upon the lab and the city above the surface. The destruction causes all security systems to malfunction, freeing Research Experiment V (codename "Echo") from the Shade program as the genetically engineered bat-hybrid supersoldier slaughters the staff and goes after REX in search of answers. Research Experiment XX (codename "Hydra") becomes the last of the three to escape, shedding her Atlantea persona from her VR-induced coma to liquidate the surviving members of the lab. The millennia-old mutant is the former ruler and last member of an advanced underwater civilization that has gone supposedly extinct, and now she tries to make sense of her surroundings after her rude awakening. Following the trail of destruction left by REX and Echo, Hydra catches up to the two just as they are about to destroy each other and the rest of the city. Subduing both fighters, she gets them to set aside their hostilities and follow her lead as they stealthily elude the heavily armed authorities searching everywhere for the lab escapees. Thus begins an epic saga that follows the trio as they journey across the stars, trying to find their place in the universe.

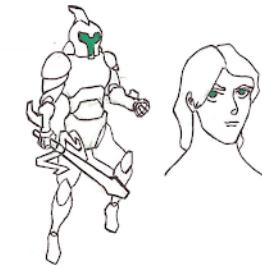
Meanwhile, a company of decorated war heroes has returned from the grave after suffering gruesome deaths while on the hunt for an elusive alien warrior. Resurrected as a brainwashed army of cyborgs, Guns of Liberty now serve the role of a machine death squad, government puppets developed through the military reverse engineering the alien's weaponry. Their new target: the three superpowered fugitives supposedly wreaking havoc across the galaxies. The cybernetically enhanced unit will stop at nothing until they have claimed and eliminated their quarry, destroying anything that stands in their way.

These mechanical killers are the least of our heroes' worries, however, for a greater evil lurks beneath the remains of the lab. A top-secret experiment at the facility's bottom level contains a dormant alien with vast psionic powers. The trio's damage across the lab has also awakened the subject, releasing him from his restraints as he psychically manipulates his captors into killing each other. The being possesses a particularly strong mental connection with REX due to the two sharing the same dream simulation, and now he is only intent on killing the boy while laying waste to the stars. He decides to take the name he has seen labeling his former prison, a name that will strike fear into hearts of many throughout the universe: Cerebrus.

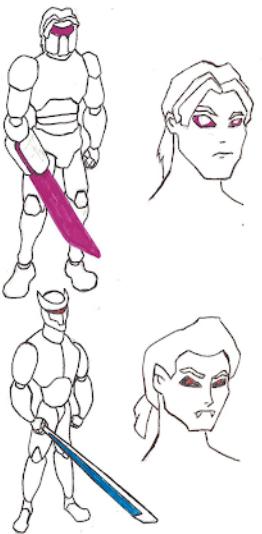
The immersive storyworld of *Interverse* exists in a retrofuturistic setting inspired by eighties and nineties pop culture, including movies, comic books, animation, and video games from those eras. This approach intends to pay homage to as well as subvert established tropes.



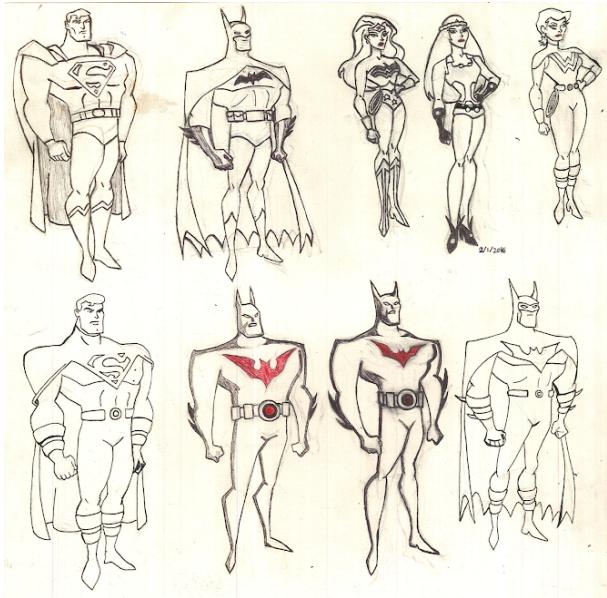
These creative inspirations largely emerge through the overall aesthetic of this fictional universe, as seen with the characters and other narrative elements throughout the different transmedial extensions.



For Triad, the franchise's three protagonists, *Interverse* features character design significantly defined by angular or blocky elements reminiscent of Bruce Timm's style in the DC Animated Universe (*Batman: The Animated Series*, *Batman Beyond*, *Justice League Unlimited*).



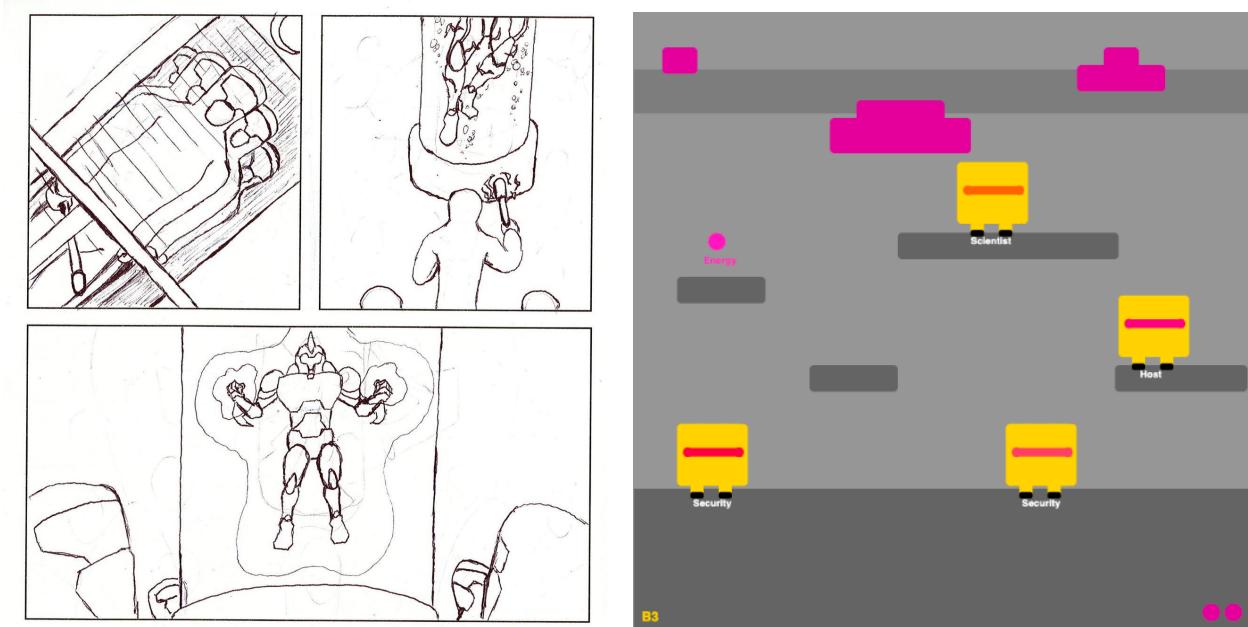
This artistic choice intentionally aims to induce a sense of nostalgia, drawing audiences in through pastiches that evoke fond memories of familiar and beloved works. On the other hand, the franchise endeavors to take the narrative in exciting new directions towards undiscovered creative territory.



Just as stormtroopers and clone troopers pervade nearly every piece of *Star Wars* media as the iconic faces of the brand, *Interverse* strives towards narrative and visual continuity across its various media products in order to reinforce worldbuilding. The franchise facilitates and realizes this technique through recurring motifs across the different creative components, such as the trio of heroes and the military government's research staff trying to contain them.



In the animated short “Guns of Liberty”, cyborg commander “Butch” Jaeger briefs his men on their mission to apprehend Triad, as the titular military unit has undergone programming by the government to perceive the main characters as dangerous threats to the universe. During this session, a large screen behind Butch displays REX, Echo, and Hydra just as they appear in the storyboard comic, with the three retaining the same armor and weapons from their previous appearance. Meanwhile, Hydra’s one-shot also shares the same lab workers as the ones present in the initial build for the game demo *Cerebrus*, as both media take place in an underground facility.



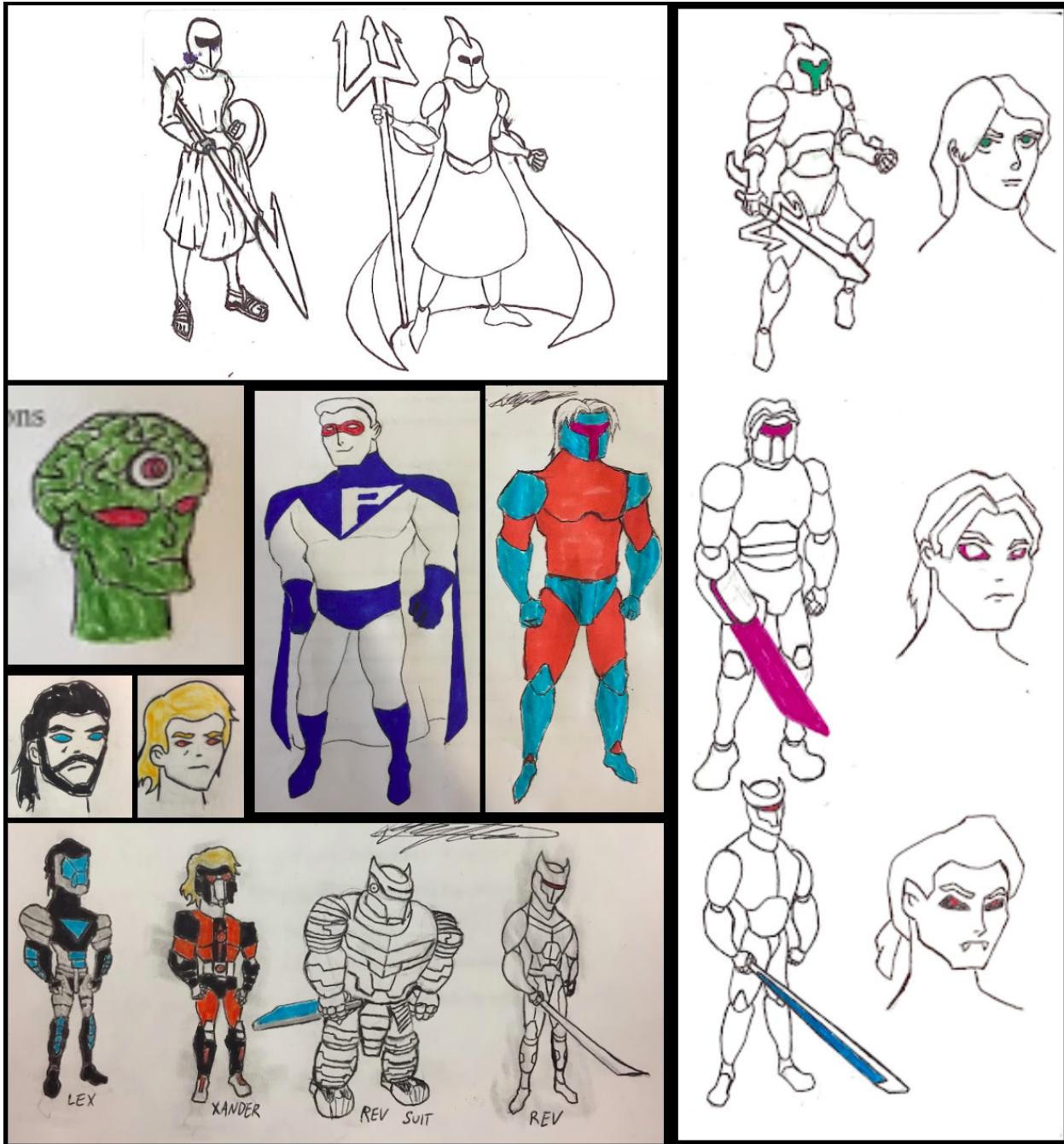
While the latter clearly exhibits a more minimalist, superdeformed style to emulate the Game Boy games, the research staff remains recognizable with their visors and one-piece hazmat suits from the storyboard, allowing audiences to revisit familiar elements from unique perspectives.

This repetition applies transmedia concepts of drillability, drawing from Henry Jenkins' convergence culture theory to instill in people an understanding regarding the interconnected nature of these media products. While these different components may initially seem narratively disparate, they also elicit and invite audience engagement by encouraging them to actively follow the distinct works throughout the franchise and put the pieces of the puzzle together. Slowly but surely, one can start to see a vibrant, absorbing storyworld manifest and unfold, with more exciting installments to come in the future as the threat of Cerebrus looms on the horizon. With this established foundation for the fictional universe, spreadability also plays a major factor in the grand scheme of this ambitious transmedia project, encouraging people who can not contain their excitement and can not get enough of the franchise to disseminate the potentially rich lore across their peers and beyond. Especially with how distribution methods and technologies have significantly transformed at near instantaneous rates through the Internet and social media, *Interverse*'s spreadability can expand to an almost global, pervasive scale like those of other contemporary franchises.

Ultimately, the actual narrative itself remains the essential part in keeping audiences invested, as rewarding them with a compelling experience engenders further engagement. Therefore, seamless integration of all these complementary transmedia elements represents a crucial aspect of *Interverse*, a craft that has continuously evolved across various bodies of work composing fictional universes throughout the history of storytelling. Dissecting transmedial extensions of the richly detailed *Watchmen* storyworld helped to unearth an invaluable creative template for tying together corresponding plotlines and characters scattered over multifarious media formats. Implementing the aforementioned recurring motifs along with their spreadability, *Interverse* follows *Watchmen*'s narrative blueprint by having different media works overlap by either running parallel to each other or picking up where another left off, enhancing immersion.



With all of these uniquely eclectic design elements and choices coming together, *Interverse* intends to represent the next big step forward for the future of franchise building, especially in regards to the current cultural phenomenon of superhero fiction. Initially stemming from the drawings and imagination of a high schooler, this storyworld also embodies a source of inspiration for other budding young creative minds to follow their dreams and create their own fascinating realms full of wonder, ready to overtake the world with compelling, resonant stories.

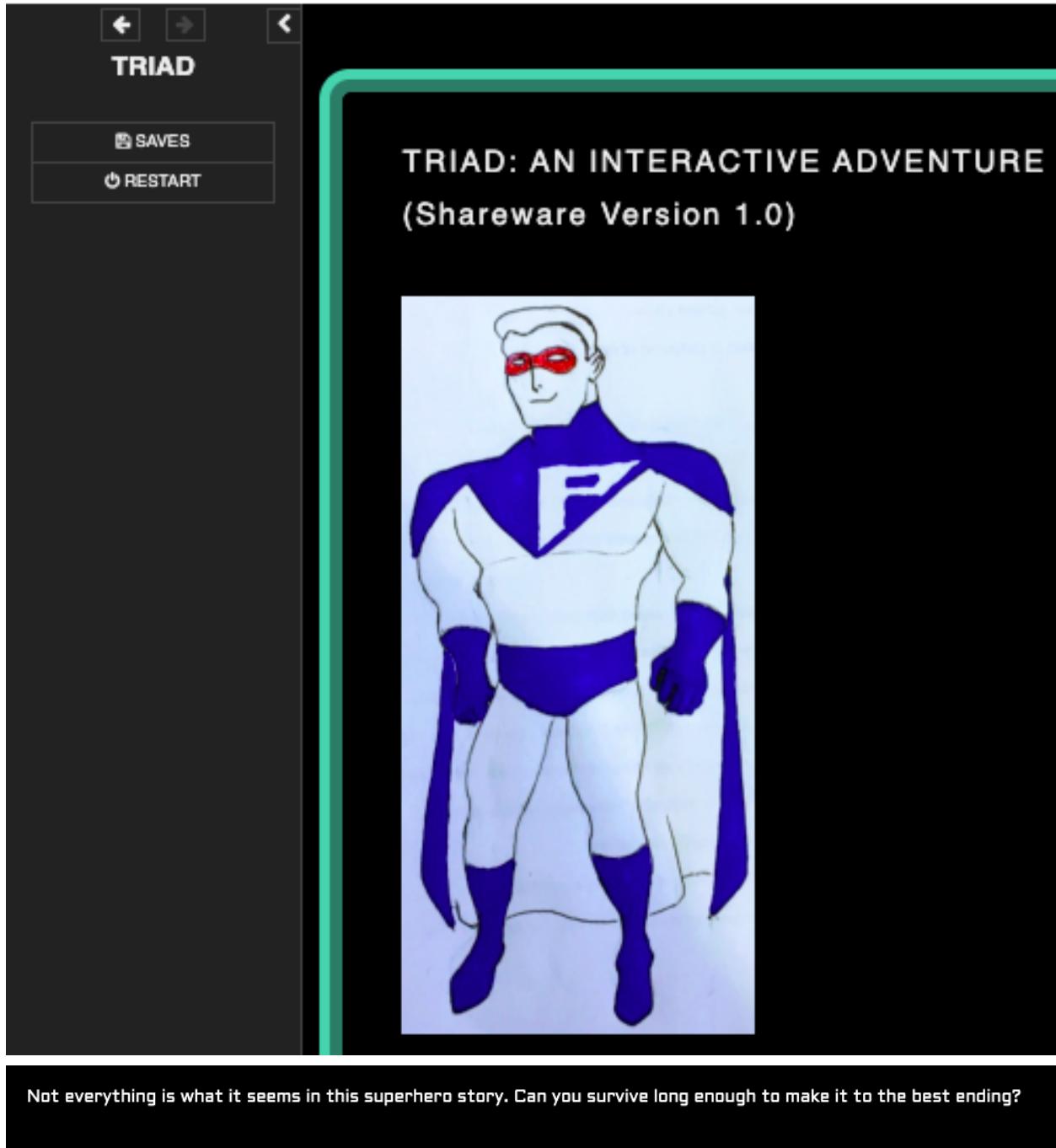


Initial character concept drawings from 2016 to 2018. Includes Queen Atlantea, Patriot, the Triad, REX's clones LEX and XANDER, and Cerebrus.

TRIAD: AN INTERACTIVE GRAPHIC NOVEL ADVENTURE (Shareware Version 1.0)

1. PATRIOT: An American icon and a symbol of hope across the world. Possesses flight, superhuman strength, and invulnerability.
 2. SHADE WILSON: Mysterious but noble vampire vigilante stalking the streets of Noir City. Possesses superhuman reflexes, accelerated healing factor, and extraordinary fighting ability. (LOCKED)
 3. HYDRA: Strong-willed warrior princess of Atlantis. Possesses superhuman strength, agility, and water manipulation. (LOCKED)
 Choose your character:

An early version of REX's IF, the trailblazer that would go on to kickstart the rest of the *Interverse* transmedia franchise. Made in 2020 using Python 3.0, this prototype demo takes the form of a text adventure game, featuring numerical inputs that correspond with different choices.



[TRIAD: REX](#), or “[Episode 1: Brute Justice and the Authoritarian Way](#)”, the franchise starter. A 2022 Twine IF remake of the previous text adventure, updated with more visual elements and a more interactive point-and-click interface. Features REX’s rude awakening from the Patriot simulation and subsequent escape from the military government’s underground research facility. Patriot prologue intends to mislead audiences in order to render twist of the main story more shocking, while Echo’s introduction as mysterious foe REV at the end establishes a cliffhanger to raise dramatic tension. Paranoia and distrust largely pervade the atmosphere of this IF, intended to reflect Cold War fears of the eighties era that inspired the franchise’s retrofuturistic setting. Such themes also critically reflect upon this time for social commentary and subversion.



Character concept drawings unveiled in 2022, revealing Echo's updated look along with his team Ultra Strike Force, supersoldiers inspired by Universal Classic Monsters. Although time constraints unfortunately prevented the rest of the group from making a major appearance this quarter, the franchise has finalized Echo's new design and will implement it in future installments.



[TRIAD: Echo, or “Episode 2: Reality Bites”](#), released the same year as a Bitsy game companion piece to REX's IF, revisiting the breakout at the subterranean lab from Echo's perspective after he awakens from his Shade simulation. The game tasks players with exploring the facility and following REX's trail of destruction to the surface world. During the playthrough, audiences will get cameo appearances from an inactive Ultra Strike Force, and can even find a still dormant Hydra in a containment pod by investigating one of the rooms, a fun little bit of foreshadowing.

TRIAD EPISODE 3: 20,000 FREAKS UNDER THE CONSPIRACY

INT. THRONE ROOM — NIGHT

An underwater throne room, styled like Greco-Roman architecture. It is pitch dark outside, with the exception of faint explosions seen and heard in the distance.

Only two people are present: QUEEN ATLANTEA and PRINCESS SCYLLA. The Queen sports stately but heavily damaged gladiatorial armor while menacingly dangling a trident over the Princess's throat.

The Princess stares intensely at the Queen, not breaking eye contact. Her armor is in pieces, her military garb underneath bloodied and her breathing uneven as she clutches the wound in her abdomen. They reside on the steps to the throne. They speak to each other in harsh and hostile tones.

QUEEN ATLANTEA

I trusted you, sister.

PRINCESS SCYLLA

So did I.

QUEEN ATLANTEA

Was all this bloodshed necessary? Was it worth it?

PRINCESS SCYLLA

I was reclaiming what was rightfully mine.

QUEEN ATLANTEA

You wanted to throw our kingdom into endless war and chaos!

PRINCESS SCYLLA

I wanted Atlantis to be great once more!

The two sisters continue glaring murderously at each other. Finally, the Queen speaks.

QUEEN ATLANTEA

Goodbye, sister. You can reign in the depths of Tartarus.

PRINCESS SCYLLA
You'll serve me there then.

The Princess taps onto the pendant around her neck and it beeps rapidly. The Queen's eyes widen in horror.

QUEEN ATLANTEA
NO-.

The throne room explodes.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - NIGHT

A woman, test subject HYDRA, wakes up in a containment pod filled with electric fluid. She's wearing futuristic armor hooked to wires and tubes, which suddenly detach as the pod opens, spilling fluid across the lab floor. Hydra gasps for air while regaining her balance. Sirens are blaring and flashing red around the lab, as the computerized voice of the MOTHERBOARD blasts throughout the room.

MOTHERBOARD (V.O.)
Warning: Research Experiments V, X, and XX compromised. Simulation failure.
Proceed with extreme caution.

The lab doors slide open and six individuals wearing hazmat suits flood in, brandishing shock prods. The LEADER approaches Hydra slowly, both arms extended outwards.

LEADER
Research Experiment XX, return to your pod now! We have been authorized to administer lethal force!

HYDRA
"Le....al....for..."

LEADER
Get back! I'm warning you!

The Leader swings his shock prod, but Hydra catches it, conducting electricity into his body and the surrounding guards. The guards scream as they melt into a transparent liquid crackling with electricity. Hydra looks curiously at the mess.

An overhead screen comes on, showing a news broadcast. It features a giant crater in the middle of a city, with two armored figures fighting viciously at the center. The ANCHORWOMAN can be heard speaking in the background.

ANCHORWOMAN (V.O.)

We're reporting live here in Newer York, as two mysterious individuals have been seen wreaking havoc throughout the city. Authorities have evacuated civilians from the area, but we're not sure if it will be enough to contain the bloodshed and chaos...

HYDRA

Blood...shed...cha...os...

EXT. CITY RUINS — DAYBREAK

The two attackers, REX and ECHO, continue fighting. REX flies around, shooting energy beams from his eyes and hands while Echo emits soundblasts and slashes away with his sonic blade. Some of the cuts land, and REX succumbs to his wounds, panting. Echo stands over him, gnashing his batlike teeth.

ECHO

Stand down. I'm not gonna say it again.

REX stops panting and regains his composure. He then envelops himself in energy and screams, threatening to explode. Echo raises his blade for a killing blow.

Suddenly, an electrical orb appears between the two, launching them towards opposite walls of the crater. They both fall to the floor then look to the orb as it dissipates and Hydra emerges from the center. Her gaze shifts between REX and Echo, then she levitates and extends her arm towards REX. A small orb begins to crackle from her hand, then grows larger and larger, humming with intensity.

HYDRA

Bloodshed...Chaos...War.

ECHO

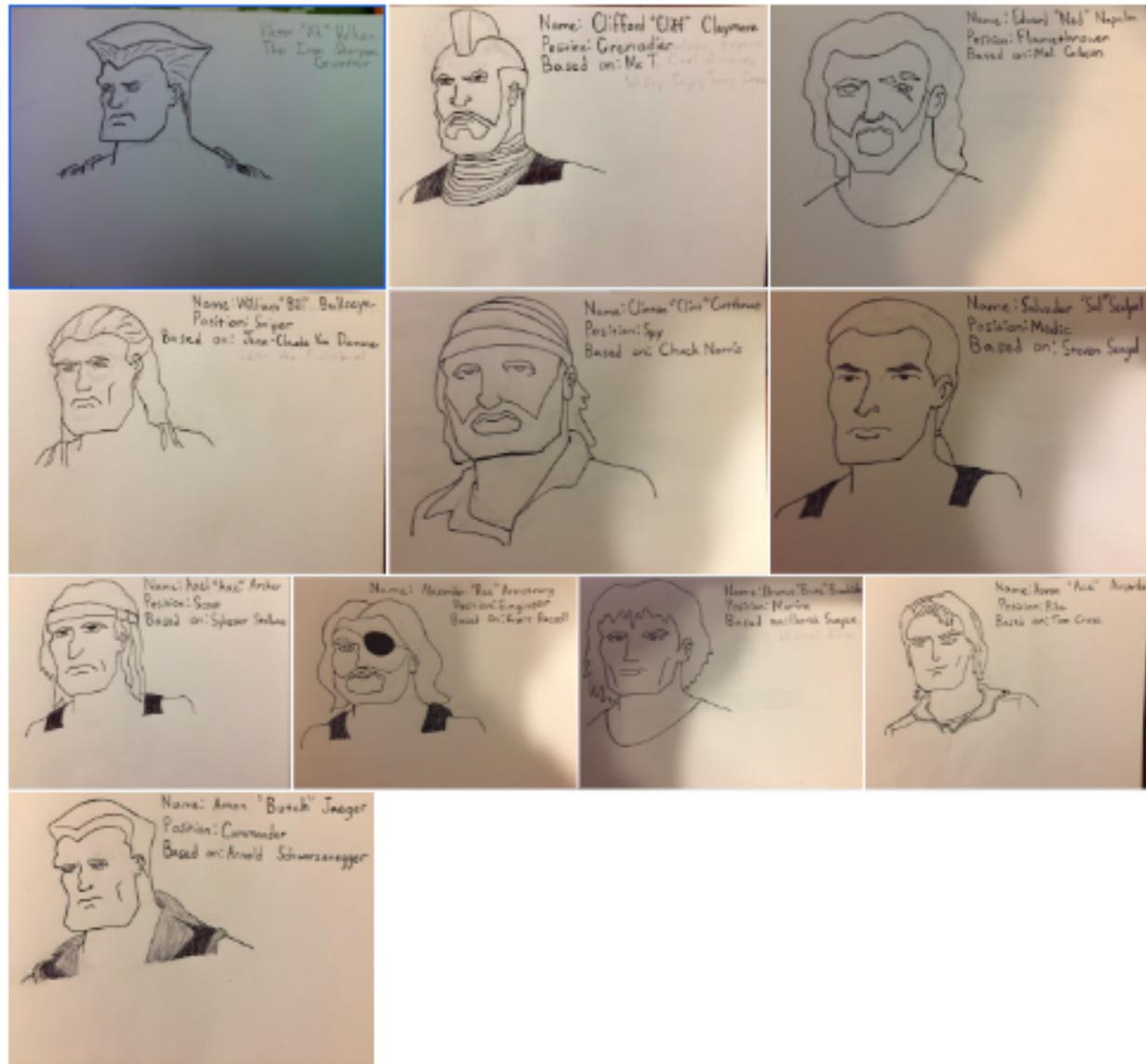
What the hell?



The initial sketches (top) versus the finalized versions (bottom) of the first three pages in the 2023 one-shot comic storyboard *TRIAD: Hydra*. This installment adapts the script for “Episode 3: 20,000 Freaks Under the Conspiracy”, illustrating the beginning of Hydra’s journey. Across the panels, the protagonist progresses from escaping her Queen Atlantea simulation in the prologue to destroying her prison and captors with her powers to joining the climactic confrontation with REX and Echo. An interesting aspect worth noting regards slight deviations in details between the script and the storyboard (e.g. Hydra breaking out of her pod before vs. after unleashing her deadly attack), indicating the unique affordances each medium provides when it comes to the art of adaptation. This also further showcases transmedia’s many prospects.

Guns of Liberty

Mar 25, 2016 – May 20, 2018



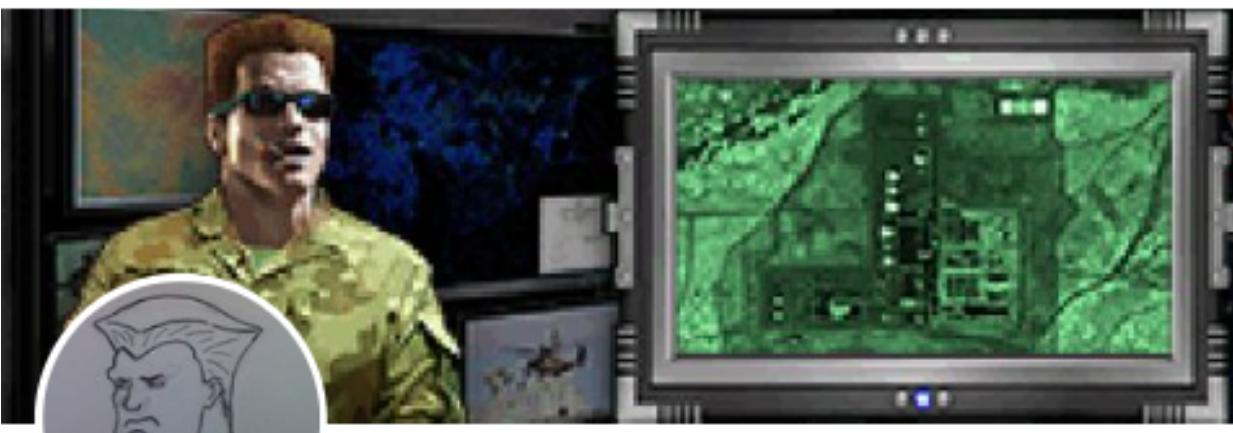
Initial character concept drawings of mercenary group Guns of Liberty from 2016 to 2018. Intends to resemble likenesses of action heroes from the eighties and nineties to evoke nostalgia.



[Animation tests](#) of “Butch” Jaeger, from 2018 (left), 2019 (middle), and 2020 (right). Represents franchise’s first foray into the medium as early prototype of the official “Guns of Liberty” short.

[←](#) **Guns of Liberty**

276 Tweets



[Edit profile](#)

Guns of Liberty

@GunsofLiberty2

The year is 1987. Follow various soldiers of (mis)fortune as they go & hunt down an escaped test subject: the extraterrestrial warrior simply known as "Jaeger".

 Joined March 2022

0 Following 0 Followers

Tweets

Replies

Media

Likes



Guns of Liberty @GunsofLiberty2 · Apr 5

'Axe'

...

Equip: SMG

Mission Report: Treachery fills the desolate tundra. Came across a pile of skulls forming a shrine. Picked up ammo nearby then paid respects. Saw a trail of glowing blood and went to investigate further...

Codec Message: 'Testing.'



The subfranchise's [official Twitter account](#), created to promote their corresponding Bitsy game.



GUNS OF LIBERTY: The Hunt for El Cazador, a 2022 Bitsy game that follows decorated war hero Amon “Butch” Jaeger as he braves the jungles of Val Verde in search of his missing company. Little does he know a dangerous foe lurks among the shadows...

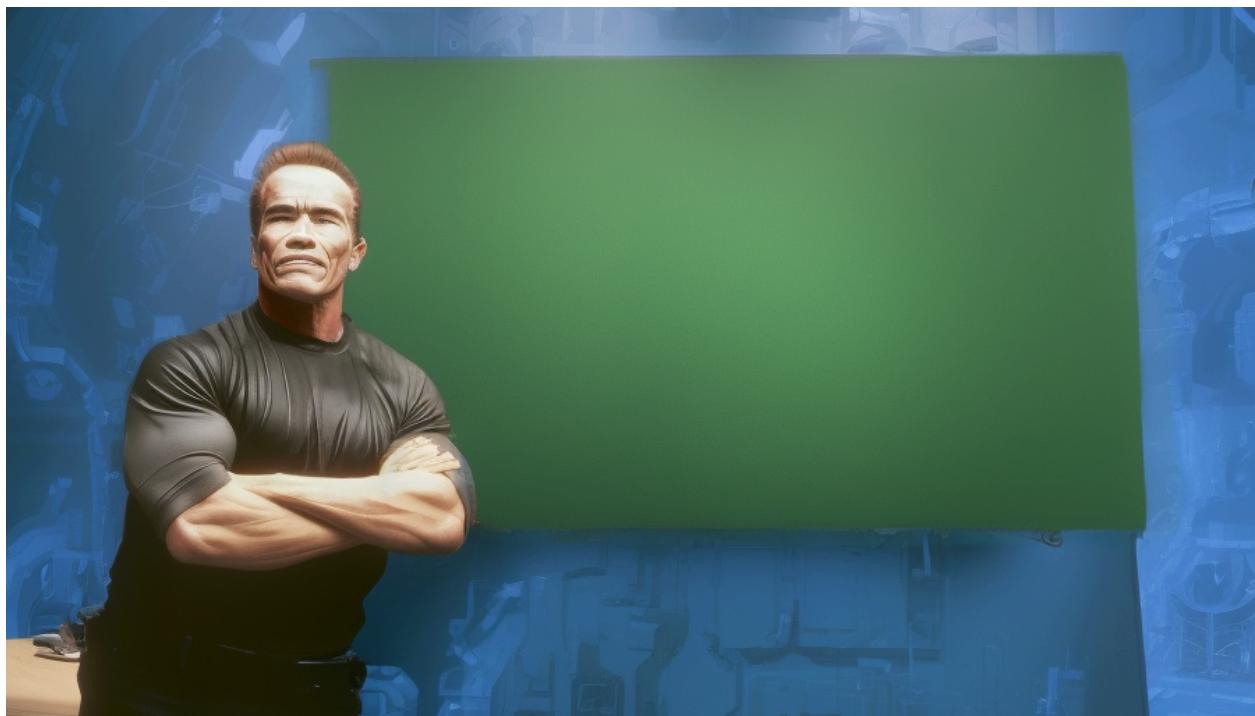
This installment reenvisiones the Twitter bot @GunsofLiberty2 as a minimalist pixelated adventure game. The game’s monochromatic green palette evokes the military and jungle setting characteristic of its eighties action movie inspirations while also emulating the contemporaneous Game Boy’s graphics, viscerally capturing the retro verisimilitude of a much explored era.



Still of reference video filmed as an unconventional form of motion capture for animated short.



First output frame after inputting reference frame into AI art program [DreamStudio](#).



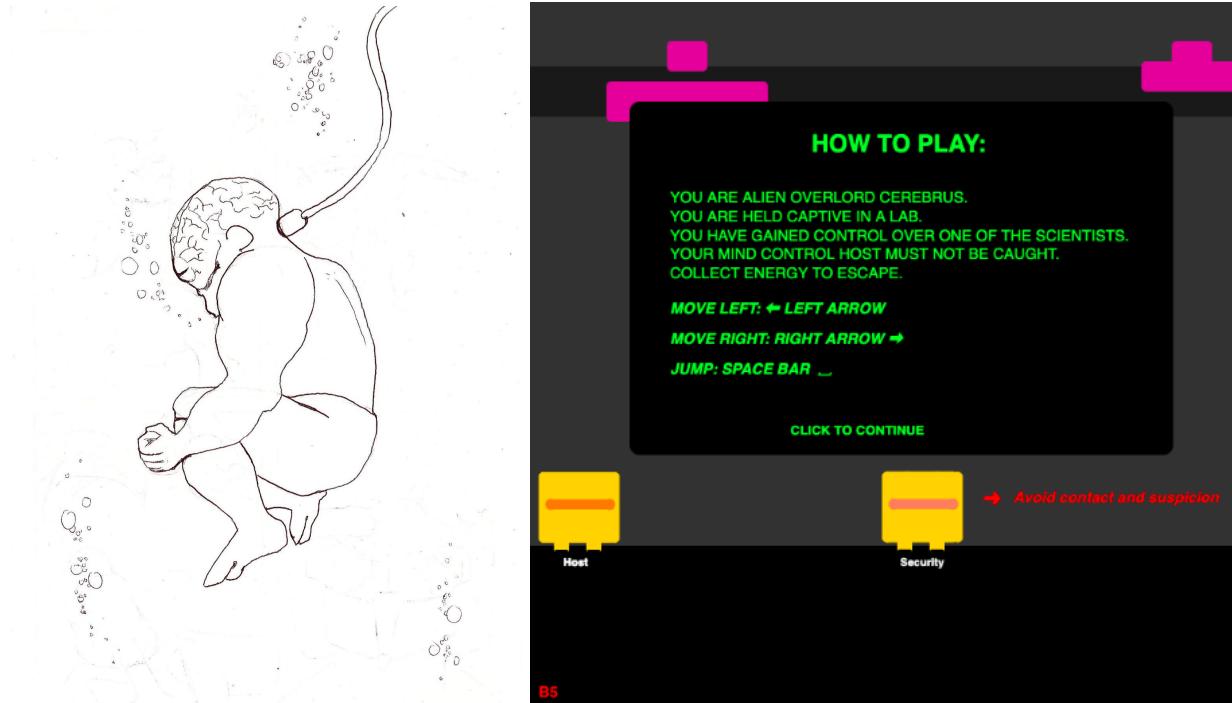
Output frame after inpainting green screen into monitor of previous frame. This technique must happen in order for chroma key effects to work and for screen to display other images appropriate to narrative content of the animation.



Output frame touched up with mechanical details through image editing software. Position of output frame must match that of original frame in order to ensure visual fidelity between final product and reference for consistent motion throughout animation when syncing in [EbSynth](#).



Still from chroma keyed final animation, pixelated to evoke graphic adventure game cutscenes.



Cerebrus' reveal in the last page of *TRIAD: Hydra*, which ties directly to the [p5.js browser game](#). The alien character's mental connection to REX causes him to wake up as well after Hydra threatens REX at the end of the storyboard. Upon awakening, Cerebrus telepathically gains control over a nearby lab worker, and from there players assume the role of Cerebrus' host as they find a way out the facility, setting into motion a series of events that will shake the universe to its very core.

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to my colleague Erica Winfrey for the insightful input on worldbuilding and exposition. I was flattered by the positive comparisons to *Warhammer*'s detailed backstories and expansive world. I also greatly appreciate the constructive feedback regarding avoiding common narrative pitfalls such as excessive or confusing information. It definitely helped me to elaborate more efficiently upon the background of my fictional world while having it flow naturally with the plot.

Many thanks to Professor Underberg-Goode for all of the helpful advice, as I had initially struggled with what creative choices to pursue and the guidance allowed me to narrow down and hone my vision. The suggestion of visual cues prompted me to implement recurring imagery such as those of all three members in Triad and the military government's research staff, strengthening the drillability and spreadability of my franchise and its lore.

As mentioned many times before, I have come a long way with this creative labor of love ever since my high school years, and I am incredibly grateful that I could continue this artistic journey throughout my time in the program and especially in this course's project. I hope these initial pieces and concepts will keep evolving into something even greater to inspire newer art to come.