

Cullen Bunn's name certainly wasn't foreign to me over the last few years, but I think it was about the time that he launched Fearless Defenders that I really started noticing him; adorable archeological lesbian romances and Dani Moonstar being a badass will do that. I kind of missed the boat with that title but his name stuck with me and when I heard Marvel was giving Magneto his own series, I was definitely intrigued. Magneto #1 got a rare A- from me and hooked me on the series just as Bunn was announced on a new Godzilla series featuring my favorite kaiju, Biollante. Within a month it seemed like Bunn was everywhere. Mixing a comic writer's restraint with a novelist's lyricism, I found Bunn to be a writer who never gives you exactly what you expect. A Magneto series that's actually a crime comic, a new take on an old horror standby, an all-ages title from the man who wrote Army of Darkness, there's always an angle. It gives the impression of a man whose mind is always churning and his output certainly supports that. So when it was announced that he would be taking on two DC A-Listers, I knew it was getting past time we gave you nice people a look behind the curtain, after all Magneto is consistently one of our best read reviews. Mr. Bunn was kind enough to talk with us and to give some intriguing and honest answers about what's to come for his impressive slate of comics and what elements of a story grab his interest.

WCBR: So, we're here with Cullen Bunn, who is the writer of everything. Cullen Bunn: Not quite everything, but I'm workin' on it. Yeah, so let's see. You have Magneto, Lobo, Sinestro, two upcoming books from DC... Aquaman and Green Lantern: The Lost Army. Terrible Lizard, Wolf Moon, am I missing anything? Sixth Gun, Hellbreak, Helheim, an upcoming book - Hero County - from Dark Horse, and Bloodfeud from Oni Press. Okay, so, kind of the obvious question is do you sleep? Well, I do sleep. First thing is a lot of it's a little bit misleading because some of my books have been done for, in some cases, years. Like Wolf Moon I've been done with for several years. And, in some instances, like Hellbreak, for instance, I'm working eight, nine months ahead. So, it's not that I have to write a script every three weeks to keep it in circulation. I'm way ahead on some projects. So, it's a little bit of an illusion, but, that said, yes, I am very busy right now. I also work every day of the week and usually... it could be ten to twelve hours a day, easily. I didn't know that. What is it like having Wolf Moon in print now, so many years later? What's interesting is I pitched Wolf Moon to Vertigo years ago and it was turned down. And then Wildstorm came in and wanted to publish it. Then when Wildstorm went away, we didn't know what was going to happen with it. We thought it might have been in limbo forever, but then Vertigo came back and wanted to do the book. So, it's very exciting. I was a little worried that no one would ever read the book so it's exciting for me that people are finally getting a chance to see it. It's interesting how I can see that my style has changed since I wrote it originally, so I am going back and tweaking some of the dialogue and things. When I originally wrote it I think I wrote a lot of bigger dialogue balloons and my style now is much punchier, I think. So I had to go back and change some things around to make it feel more like one of my current books. Well, skipping ahead to my Wolf Moon question: there are so many werewolf stories out there, what was it about this one that you were like, "This is the twist. This is what makes it stand out"? Well, one of the things that I always thought were scary about werewolves is- Well, yes, it's scary that a werewolf will rip you apart and destroy you and eat you alive and all that, that's very terrifying. But one of the things that really scares me about the idea of a werewolf is that it's changing you. It's something you can't control, y'know, it changes its victim into this beast and then they are out of control and one of the things I always thought is, when that happens, the people that are usually closest to them are family, friends. And those are the people who are probably going to be their victims. So, I wanted to explore what happens to the person who turns into a werewolf after the fact.

And I thought, by having the werewolf change or jump places, I was able to explore that with many different characters and I liked that aspect of it. Turning to Marvel, you're on Magneto right now. Magneto is one of the only comics that was not, or at least one of very few comics that was not stated to be ending with "Secret Wars". Right. Is "Secret Wars" going to be a real change for him or, whenever it ends, will he kind of come back to the stuff we're doing now with Genosha and Well, coming out of "Secret Wars", things are going to change, not just for Magneto, but, just, across the board and it will impact the Magneto book in some significant ways. That's pretty much all I can say. Understood. Yeah. The book will have some significant changes to it. Y'know, we're working that out right now, what it would be and what's going to happen with Magneto and how it will continue in the face of this, sort of this new landscape we're gonna be looking at. And one thing that I thought was really interesting to come back to about Magneto, was that "Axis" really grew out of Uncanny Avengers primarily, but I don't think there was ever really a doubt that a Nazi stealing the brain of Charles Xavier was going to involve Magneto. Right. Did you know the whole time that that was going to be something you had to build to or- No. No, it came up later. When I started on Magneto I turned in outlines of where the series would go, but, yeah, "Axis" threw some of that for a loop, because I was well into the series before I knew this event's coming up and that Magneto plays a big role in it. I find that very interesting because I think crossovers have a reputation for kind of messing up books- Sure. But I found that with Magneto I wasn't sure whether you knew or not. Like that was a real question that I had to ask. Yeah, well, as soon as I found out I spent a lot of time talking to Rick Remender about what he was going to be doing and how my book could fit into that and one of the things I really wanted to do going into the crossover was not to upset the tone of Magneto, even though I was playing in another storyline. I wanted the tone of Magneto to continue on. And hopefully I managed to do that for at least most of the issues. I found it was very, surprisingly natural, so well done. Awesome. Good. Thank you. As you mentioned, you've now got two books coming from DC in addition to the two that you're already doing. The solicitation for Green Lantern: The Lost Army mentions characters like Two-Six, Kilowog, and John Stewart. I was curious, particularly because of John Stewart, who has kind of been so different over the years, being an architect, being a Marine- Right. Who is he to you? Where do you start with that character? Well, in Green Lantern: The Lost Army we are definitely dealing with the Green Lantern Corps in unfamiliar and hostile territory. So, I wanted to draw on his time as a Marine and a soldier and a man who could be a great, great leader. And so I'm playing a lot of that, I'm pulling a lot from his history as a soldier and how he defines leadership and how the role of leadership for him changes based on the situation, based on the people he's working with. I think, even from the earliest pages of the series, it's going to be very clear that this is a story of John Stewart becoming, y'know, how he becomes a great leader. He's always been in a leadership position, but I've never been a hundred percent sure he's the best leader. He's always kind of walked a line between leading and just being a soldier and this is his chance to be a leader and to either succeed or really fail in that role. And, so, you mention that it's not just a small- It's not just that small handful of Green Lanterns who's going wherever they're going. It's a large chunk of the Corps. Almost every Green Lantern is going to be gone from the DC Universe. And in order to tell a good story I need to focus on a core group, otherwise, y'know, I've got hundreds and hundreds of characters. So, I am telling the story from the point of view of a smaller group of characters, but, yeah, every Green Lantern is gone and is lost, so to speak, and could potentially show up in the series. So, in addition to that, Robert Venditti, who's one of the only people kind of staying on the Lantern books now with you, is having Hal kind of go

renegade. Right. So, the greatest Green Lantern is gone. The rest of the Green Lanterns are gone. Red Lanterns ended. Kyle Rayner's apparently dead! Yes. Things have really been shaken up. So, who do you think fills that gap? Well, I think it's pretty obvious, at least in this character's mind it's obvious. This is Sinestro's opportunity to rise to the occasion. So, what you'll be seeing in Sinestro is- to some degree he knew this was coming. Sinestro has Lyssa Drak as part of his group and she has these prophetic visions. And, if you read closely, you'll see in past issues of Sinestro she's telling him, "your moment is at hand. Your moment is coming." I haven't said what that moment is, but this is the moment she's been referring to. And Sinestro is stepping up and this is his chance to make the Sinestro Corp the peacekeeping- I guess peacekeeping is an odd term- Security, then. To become the security force for the universe. And in future issues, especially after issue #14 on, that's Sinestro's goal. He's already sort of doing a power grab but now you're going to be seeing him putting that power grab into use as the security force for the universe. And then you're taking on another really big character with Aquaman. Yes. I was kind of curious, Aquaman, y'know, has a lot of weird baggage. I mean, people think he's a joke, some people really love him very dearly. What is it that only Aquaman can do for a story? What is it about the character that you think, like, this is where he lives and what he can do that Superman can't. I think Aquaman- He's a very- First of all he's a very powerful character, but he's also a little bit of an everyman despite the fact that he's, y'know, the king of Atlantis and all these things. I think Aquaman's very much an everyman character, despite these powers. I like that he's a character who never really wanted to be a ruler and has always had to deal with those aspects of his life and they've always kind of grated against him. For me, Aquaman has always had this sort of science fantasy vibe that I really like. I've said that before and some readers have gotten upset that, "Oh, you're turning it into"- I don't know what they think when I say fantasy, but Aquaman has always, always, from the very earliest appearances, been a fantasy story. So, I don't understand what the people get who upset over the term fantasy are thinking, but, y'know- They need to broaden their definition of fantasy, because they're reading comic books, first of all. But I love this sort of science fantasy vibe. I see in him this potential for these 'John Carter of Mars' stories and the stories of Atlantis. Atlantis has such a huge history and this epic feel, and I think that's a big thing that Aquaman can do. Because y'know, there an entire civilization that we can explore and a history of that civilization that we can explore through Aquaman. I think that's great. I'm a big Aquaman fan, and that sounds like something I want to read, so I'm really glad to hear that. I mean, the tone of the story is going to change. That's just me writing a different story than Jeff Parker's. The tone will change. And when we start up in issue #41 I think longtime fans are gonna be a little startled and say, "What the hell is going on with this story" and, y'know, they're gonna have to bear with me and let me show them. We're gonna start this new story right in the middle and then do flashbacks that are gonna be telling how we got there. And the interesting thing about being able to do it that way is we know Aquaman's gonna change. Everybody knows the appearance of Aquaman's gonna change and there's gonna be a little bit of a shake-up, but this gives me a chance to tell a story of this sort of new interpretation of Aquaman, as well as stories of classic Aquaman kind of running parallel. So, each issue has that. I can do both things with each issue. Awesome. So, this one is not as current, but I wanted to look back a couple months. You just finished Godzilla: Cataclysm for IDW. Yes. I was curious. Were you a Godzilla fan growing up? Yeah, I've always been a Godzilla fan. Godzilla was definitely on my bucket list of characters I wanted to do something with, so it was exciting for me to be able to write this story. But, yeah, Godzilla is- I'm a huge Godzilla fan. Huge. I love the character. I love Godzilla. Did

you have like a favorite kaiju in the franchise and did you get to use them?Y'know, I have several. My favorites change from time to time.Sure.Y'know, when I was a kid -- besides Godzilla -- King Caesar was always my favorite and I didn't use him. Anguirus was always a favorite of mine. I did get to use him briefly. And then, if I think about the more recent- I say more recent, but now they're, y'know, closing in on twenty years old or whatever. I always liked Battra, from Godzilla Vs. Mothra, but I didn't really use him in the book either. So... I like 'em all. I don't necessarily have a favorite, 'cause it changes from day to day. I have no idea why I didn't write Battra into the book in a bigger way, though, because Battra- Larva form Battra was always a favorite because it's this big worm that has the electricity shooting around. I always loved that.Was that history with Godzilla and giant monsters a big influence on Terrible Lizard?Yes. Yeah. Terrible Lizard came from a love of giant monster movies, y'know, sci-fi matinees in the afternoon, and books like Devil Dinosaur from the great Jack Kirby. Those were all big influences on Terrible Lizard. And I just wanted to tell a story that my kid could read and really enjoy. I wanted a story that, y'know, parents could read with their kid and everybody could enjoy it together. And that's where that book all came from.Is it weird- I don't know, again, like you said, maybe these aren't contemporaneous writings, but - Is it weird going from something that is trying to be for your kid and then going to something like Lobo, where-Uh, y'know, not really. Not for me at least. I feel like these are all different kinds of stories I want to tell, so, for me, I know when I write a Lobo story, this is the tone of the Lobo story. And, y'know, there's never any crossed lines with me thinking, y'know, that a Terrible Lizard story might achieve the level of violence that a Lobo can achieve.Sure.So, usually I feel like I do pretty well balancing the different kinds of stories. Particularly with Godzilla, but a little bit of a thread throughout a lot of your work, I found,- Godzilla was playing a lot with myth and story on a very active level.Right.Do you see that as something that comics, particularly comics that are in this kind of greater continuity, naturally play into?Yeah, I think so. And I think Godzilla was obviously right out there. Y'know, I state right up front this is, y'know, we're talking about a mythology built around these monsters. But even in Magneto, I feel like the story deals with the legend of Magneto and how people see Magneto. And I think it's something I come back to a lot. I like the idea that these characters are big, y'know, larger than life and if I see them as being in the real world, I want to see how that affects them and how legends are formed around them and myths are formed around them and stories are formed around them. And I find myself coming back to that again and again.So, particularly with that in mind, I was curious, what do you feel are the responsibilities of a writer who's working with licensed or work-for-hire material? Do you feel like that your responsibility is to the fan or to the story or do you feel like you have to like contribute in some way to the character going forward?Uh, it's a little bit of everything, I guess. I think my first responsibility is to telling a good story. And telling a good story doesn't necessarily always go right along with what all the fans want. And I've done it time and time again. And fans can get very angry when things change for their characters. But, in the service of a good story, I can't pander to that. I can't just go along with what the fans want in the story otherwise there wouldn't be a story there. I want people to worry about these characters and be interested in what these characters are doing and be afraid of the paths these characters may be going down. But, it's all about story first.Of course I want fans to be happy with it and everything. But, if the only thing that's going to make a fan happy is they get exactly what they want, then it's never gonna happen. I mean, not with me. You're not going to get everything you want out of these characters. I try to honor what has come before, although I don't want to be too beholden to continuity. I try to know what's going on. I try to keep up to date with it, but, in the end, again,

story's going to trump continuity every time for me. Well. Thank you so much for talking to me, man. Oh, anytime, man. The first trade of Cullen Bunn's all-ages series, *Terrible Lizard* is out this week, *Wolf Moon #6* will be released on May 6th, and the DC books we discussed will launch in June, after the "Convergence" event. The post *What Lurks Within: An Interview With Cullen Bunn* appeared first on *Weekly Comic Book Review*.

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