

## [Percy Carey's Comic Book Corner: Neil & Eldon Thompson](#)



[Each week, *Complex* columnist **Percy Carey** a.k.a. **MF Grimm** dives into the world of comic books with industry interviews, reviews and more. All MF Grimm music can now be purchased on iTunes. Follow Percy on Twitter [here](#)].

For those of you who habitually read my blog, you'll recognize the name William Wilson, the guru behind **Arch Enemy Entertainment**. As usual, of course, behind every great general are the grunts in the trenches shoring up the battle lines. I had the chance to sit with two admitted grunts and get their take on comics, movies, and life on the front line.

**Neil Thompson** is one of our stable of writers in Arch Enemy, with projects *Karma*, *The Diplomat*, and *Born & Bred* currently in development. In addition to comics, he also recently directed a short film called *Thorns*, written by his novelist brother [Eldon Thompson](#). Eldon is the author of the medieval fantasy series *The Legend of Asahiel*. In addition, his script adaptation of the bestselling Terry Brooks' novel *The Elfstones of Shannara* is currently under option at Warner Bros. Check out my interview with the brothers Thompson...

**Percy Carey: All right, we'll get to the comics and the movies and all that, but first things first: you guys look like a couple of WWE wrestlers. Just how heavy are the pencils you guys use to write with?**

Neil: Yeah, we get that a lot.

Eldon: We're obviously compensating for small... vocabularies.

Neil: Mine's huge.

**Percy Carey: You mean the vocab. Gotcha. We'll leave it at that. So how did you first get associated with Arch Enemy?**

Eldon: I thought I was trying out for the metal band of the same name. I should've read the fine [print](#).

Neil: Like most of Arch Enemy, I think, I got drafted by Will. The Diplomat was originally a screenplay, but Will thought it had strong comic book potential as well, so he lassoed me in to write the comic script. I had worked with him before on our entry into the Sasquatch Anthology, which was all about the imbecility of pitching in Hollywood. I figured having a nice visual representation of the film would be one more tool in getting a film exec to take a closer look.

**Percy Carey: So it was actually film that led you to comics, not vice versa?**

Neil: Definitely. Insanity led me to films, films led me to comics. But ultimately, it's all about synergy.

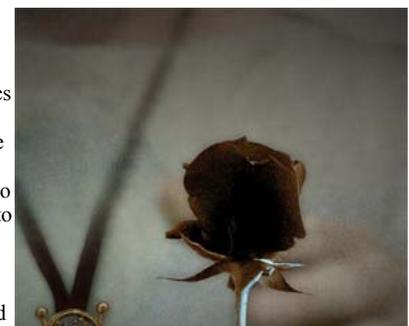
Eldon: Seems these days, the lines between media are becoming ever less distinct.

**Percy Carey: Speaking of other media, your most recent project was the short film *Thorns*. How did that come about?**

Neil: Wow. Well, *Thorns* is the product of my insanity and Eldon's drunken stupor.

Eldon: What can I say? Those Italians know their wine. Actually, what happened is Neil wrote a feature that drew interest from a Hollywood producer. To pitch him as the director, this producer asked Neil to provide a sample of his work. For that, he really only had his reel of [student](#) films from his time at USC. Though they drew rave reviews and "A" grades, these films weren't exactly what Neil wanted studio execs to judge him on. So he decided to make a short film that would better represent his abilities. When they came looking for potential material, the best I had to offer was a short story I'd cooked up years ago while on a writers retreat in Rome. Somehow, that story became the one everyone latched onto. An extremely ambitious project, for an independent short, but that was part of the attraction. The "insanity" Neil refers to is his need to tackle seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The bigger the challenge, the greater his desire to see it overcome.

Neil: It's a sickness. But I think it's one we both [share](#). I don't think there's a comic book fan out there who wouldn't want to see their favorite book done really well on the big screen, like what Chris Nolan did



for *Batman*. Same with *The Diplomat* and Tyrese Gibson's *Mayhem* that you and Will had a hand in, and Eldon's books for sure. They're all these big, fantastic worlds that, if done right, would just make awesome films. And that's what we want to do, what we want to bring to and draw from the comic book world, and any media for that matter. We want to tell great stories in a big way, and we just weren't going to show anyone we could do that by filming a short about two angry brothers crying over their dying grandmother. We needed something bigger, more accessible than melodrama, but... turns out that's easier said than done. Who knew?

**Percy Carey: So what, were you blowing shit up?**

Neil: Well, that's what I wanted to do. Light a firecracker in Eldon's sphincter and see what happened.

Eldon: I couldn't squeeze that into the story.

Neil: Not with that attitude, he couldn't. But *Thorns* actually isn't "big", it was just audacious. It was a period piece set in ancient Rome on a low [budget](#), you know. Who knew togas would cost so goddamn much?

Eldon: Turns out, they don't really build homes with Roman-style courtyards anymore—or "inner peristyles" as I guess they're called. So we had to build one ourselves. And though the film is only 18 minutes long, it contains a full-blown, three-act story... something that most short films lack. Oh, and in Hollywood, you're constantly being questioned. For instance, we had an iron fence on our set, and everyone wanted to know if iron was used during the Roman Empire. (For the record, yes, we did our research, and the Iron Age began centuries prior to Rome's rise.) Point is, we needed much more than a handheld digicam and a dirty [dorm room](#) to pull this off, so everyone kept telling us it couldn't be done. For what it's worth, we proved them wrong.

**Percy Carey: But you do mean to blow shit up in the next one, right?**

Eldon: Quite possibly. Depends on the project, I suppose. I know that *Eternal Boyd*, a psychological thriller, opens with a plane wreck. A pretty nasty one, I might add.

Neil: Or better yet, if you've read Eldon's books—well, first of all, if you haven't, you should—you know we've got medieval cities being ripped apart and torched by a massive freakin' dragon. That's the shit I want to blow the hell up! Awesome.

Eldon: Well, there's that. Although that might take a slightly bigger budget than anyone's offered us just yet... Anyone? Anyone?

Neil: Hey, you got yours from HarperCollins already.

Eldon: Yeah, I suppose we might at least get the caterer for that.

Neil: No way. We're not skimping on the catering.

**Percy Carey: How about comic book adaptations of your novels? Any plans?**

Eldon: I don't know. You'll have to check with Will on that one.

Neil: So much to do, so little time.

**Percy Carey: So what's next on the horizon?**

Eldon: The official release of *Thorns* was what, April? Since then, we've been focused on getting copies to agents and producers who want to have a look. We screened it in the Short Film Corner at the Cannes Film Festival a few weeks ago. And though we're still fighting jetlag from that one, we've got a couple other film festivals already lined up. Turns out that making a film—as with comics, music, or any other art form—is only half the battle. Promotion is a whole 'nother ball of wax. I think I can speak for both of us when I say we'd much rather be in pre-production already on the next project. But we're still taking bids on a number of different story proposals... in various mediums. To some extent, priority is driven by [investor](#) interest.

Neil: That's why I like comics. Or at least one reason. Just like *Thorns*, they're often small enough that I can be my own investor. We've got Claudio Sepulveda's finished artwork on *The Diplomat*, which is just fantastic work I'm hoping we can get on the shelves soon; I've got another two issues of *Karma* to plow through; and whatever other projects I'm lucky enough to work with Arch Enemy on. We're just, you know, shoulders lowered and keep on pushing.

Percy Carey: Thanks for hanging out today. You guys are both gonna be at Comic-Con this year, right?

Eldon: Between my new book release and all the people I know who are scheduled to attend, I don't think I could escape it if I wanted to. But seriously, I always enjoy Comic-Con. Wouldn't miss it.

Neil: Yeah, it's the only place he can put on his Wonder Woman tights without getting mocked. It's very sad to see him cry, but his tears make me happy. Go ahead, punch him in the jimmy, try it out. You'll feel better, seriously.

**Percy Carey: I'll take your word for that one. Thanks, guys.**

Neil: Indeed. Thanks, man.

Eldon: [*Sniffles*] I think I have something in my eye.

**BONUS: TYRESE TALKS 'MAYHEM!' ON RUSSIAN TV!**



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