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What is this thing called Joe?

It all began for Joe Vissichelli with the TV cartoons of “Popeye” and “Woody Woodpecker” and the sprawling spread of now-classic newspaper comics of the original Long Island Press.

By fourth grade, the ever-doodling, juvenile wise guy added to his influences the almighty textbook of cartooning called Mad magazine and he soaked up the art and sarcasm of its “usual gang of idiots” like a hunk of Italian bread dipped in a pot of tomato sauce.

In high school, he furthered his off-beat development by joining the misfits of the cross-country and track teams when running was just considered weird. With his fellow underdogs, he established a “Veterans of the Vomit” Club for particularly hard workers, with its own version of the “Cover the Earth” logo.

Joe earned college degrees in commercial and fine art, and set out to be a well-rounded artist with his eventual goal of becoming a comic strip cartoonist firmly in the back of his mind. He continued running as well, to maintain his fitness and unwind.

Vissichelli began his professional career as a graphic designer for a New York City fan magazine publisher. When that job wore thin, a call to the New York Daily News in search of a professional cartooning background landed him a visit with staff artist and cartoonist Bill Kresse.

Included in the tour was the time-warp that was then the Sunday comics coloring room – complete with its smoky klatch of cigar-chomping, visored men applying mysterious lime green paint to

acetates under old-time poker lights. A referral to Archie Comics capped a worthwhile get-together that landed Joe a production job at the big-time kids' comics publisher.

There he was starstruck by the collective auras of such luminous pros as Stan Goldberg, Dan DeCarlo and the long-deceased but artistically ever-present Archie originator, Bob Montana. Regularly working with comic art, Joe absorbed and enjoyed the lessons of the masters.

But ever-restless and determined to further develop his own style and abilities, Vissichelli followed a lead to a design and illustration job for an advertising and printing firm, advancing his drawing skills after hours with freelance, a failed first attempt at comic strip syndication and frequent figure-sketching at New York City's famed Art Students League.

Joe was art directing for a retail chain when computers first swept into graphic design and had no clue where they were going or if he wanted to follow. He soon explored other modes, art and not, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, along with some freelance design and illustration, party caricatures and another unsatisfying syndication try later on.

In 1997, he finally studied digital design while also working in the sign industry. This furthered his creative confusion as he regularly split his days between computers in the mornings and gold leaf, sign paint and brushes after noon. But cartooning finally won out when Joe joined Long Island's Berndt Toast Gang, whose core is the Long Island chapter of The National Cartoonists Society.

Now a well-established presence on the New York City-metro caricature entertainment circuit, Joe's cartoonist persona is firmly entrenched and his Misquips webcomic suits his comic strip urges as well. With running still supporting his energy and outlook, he also uses all his various creative abilities for freelance projects large and small.