

Odd Man Out

The bizarre tastes of cartoonist **Brett Von Schlosser**.



Some people prefer the finer things in life, while others take pleasure in normalcy or routine. Brett Von Schlosser, on the other hand, likes things nice and weird.

A north Minneapolis library worker by day, cartoonist by night and part-time comics peddler at Big Brain in Minneapolis, Brett is an authentically odd duck who lives and breathes the obscure. He's also a personal friend of mine, which makes our interview, in the Elmwood House, an 1887 former B&B in South Minneapolis, where he lives, all the more fun.

"I like the odd knock-offs of cultural trends, because they tend to be weirder than the actual thing they're emulating," Brett explains, leaning back in an antique sofa. For example, instead of the Beatles, he likes Herman's Hermits. And instead of collecting popular comics, he looks for issues of *U.S. 1*, a Marvel series from the '70s about a trucker with a CB radio in his brain who occasionally drives into space. For Halloween last year, Brett paper-mâché'd a giant eyeball and wore it on his head in tribute to a minor character in Charles Burns' comic *Teen Plague*.

Each month, Brett shares his odd predilections with the public in the form of posters he designs for Trash Film Debauchery's movie

◀ Brett at the Elmwood House, an old B&B where he lives.

▶ (clockwise from left) A couple sketches from Brett's studio; inside Big Brain Comics; a sampling of Brett's personal comics collection; taxidermy in the Elmwood House; hilarious bin labels at Ax-Man Surplus store.



nights at the Turf Club and Trylon Micro Cinema. The group screens rare flicks on subjects such as the dystopian future, spooky kung fu, and disturbing foreign children's movies, like *Dirkie*, a 1969 South African film about a little boy who survives a plane crash and wanders through the Kalahari desert getting attacked by everything, including the sun.

As one might guess, the mall or a chain restaurant is one of the last places you'll find Brett. He prefers to dine on marinated pork tacos at El Nuevo Rodeo on Lake Street, Afghani pizza at Crescent Moon Bakery and bánh mì at Jasmine Deli on 25th and Nicollet. For drinks, he stops by Donnie Dirk's Zombie Den in Northeast Minneapolis. And he wouldn't be doing his duty if he didn't mention Totino's, his family's famous Italian restaurant in Mounds View.

As for shopping, Brett likes Arc's Value Village, where he used to work, in his hometown of Richfield. "The coolest thing I ever found there was a Laser VideoDisc player and a bunch of movies, like *Rocky*, *E.T.* and *Ghostbusters*."

He's also a fan of Ax-Man, a bizarre local surplus store chain, and Schatzlein Saddle Shop on East Lake Street, where he buys jeans and avoids the silently judging eyes of the hardcore punks

next door at Extreme Noise record shop.

Through working at North Regional Library, Brett is slowly familiarizing himself with North Minneapolis. "The best music at any grocery store I've ever been to is at So Low Grocery Outlet on North Lowry Avenue," he says. "It's like nonstop old-school funk and soul. The music alone is worth the trip, but the prices are nice too."

A year-round bicyclist, Brett's seen his fair share of anomalies: owls, eagles and foxes down by the river; an apparent suicide off the Hennepin Avenue bridge; and a brick that came sailing by his head, thrown from the Weber Park bridge. "I've had somebody try to attack me with bicycle handlebars," he recalls.

When he's not watching weird movies or fending off bike attacks, Brett sells his comics at Big Brain alongside several of his local artist pals, like Tim Sievert, Vincent Stall and Lars Martinsen. "I'm very much into the comics and printing community," he says. "I feel a lot of dissatisfaction with contemporary movies and music, but for some reason, comic books feel like they're thriving and getting better and better every year."

Favorite Haunts

→ AX-MAN SURPLUS STORES: "Ax-Man is just a wonderful weird place. The most fun job in the world would be whoever gets to make the goofy joke signs, like for buckets of plastic eyeballs."

→ THE ELMWOOD HOUSE: "The members of [bands] The King Khan & BBQ Show and Those Darlins stayed here. They were so excited when they found my record collection and wanted to listen to Charles Manson's *LIE* album over and over, and blood came running down the walls. A pipe had gotten loosened from the bathroom on the second floor, so when somebody turned on the shower, water was coming down the walls, dark reddish brown. You could say that the earthly explanation was that it was merely a pipe, but there was red liquid flowing down those walls."

→ DONNIE DIRK'S ZOMBIE DEN: "When I heard that place was going to be around, I was apprehensive, because I thought it just going to be people wearing zombie costumes, and that'll get boring. But it's actually a pretty decent bar with a lot of bizarre atmosphere."

→ GANCHEN: "They have a lot of dishes that are similar to [the old] Asia, but way cheaper."



→ JASMINE DELI: "I love all the Vietnamese cuisine you can get in Minneapolis. That might be my favorite food. Jasmine Deli is a staple of life for me."

→ TOTINO'S ITALIAN KITCHEN: "I grew up eating at Totino's in Northeast. My grandmother, my mother and my sister all worked there. It's now moved to Mounds View but I'll still make the trek to eat the ravioli."

+ AX-MAN SURPLUS STORES
Multiple Twin Cities locations
ax-man.com

DONNIE DIRK'S ZOMBIE DEN
2027 N. 2nd St., Mpls.
612.588.9700
donniedirks.com

GANCHEN
1833 Nicollet Ave., Mpls.
612.872.8663
ganchenbar.com

JASMINE DELI
2532 Nicollet Ave., Mpls.
612.870.4700

TOTINO'S ITALIAN KITCHEN
2535 W. Cty Rd Hwy 10
Mounds View
763.780.0712
totinoskitchen.com