

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH WHITNEY WASSON

*An in-depth Q&A with web
comic artist and creator of
"Sober Rabbit"*

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Whitney Wasson (they/them) is a webcomic artist/cartoonist and comedian from Arkansas who is now located in Chicago, Illinois. They draw the weekly webcomic about recovery called "Sober Rabbit" and have participated in this artist interview with us to help you get to know them and their artistic journey better. Online, their comics and art have been featured on Weekly Humorist.com., and their Patreon offers bonus Sober Rabbit comics, coloring pages, special discounts in their online stores and more. Links to their website, patreon, stores and socials are included on the right.

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



When did you first start/grow your passion for drawing?

"I've been drawing since I was a little kid, as soon as I was able. I liked painting when I was a toddler and then drew cartoons of my parents and their friends (from my dad's bar.) I really liked and was inspired by Richard Scarry books. He drew lots of characters in big crowd scenes, doing little slice of life things like working or grocery shopping. It looked like real life but it was cute animals, so it was appealing as a kid. I remember copying Hannah Barbara cartoon characters from a picture book my grandma gave me, same with Mickey Mouse. I had always wanted to be a cartoonist but lost track of that passion in college, I guess, when I got really involved with theatre and then standup comedy. Both art forms are more immediate. Drawing takes a lot of time, especially drawing sequential comics. I've always kept drawing (doodles at work, journals) but my passion for webcomics was really restarted when I got injured in 2019."

What inspired you to start creating webcomics?

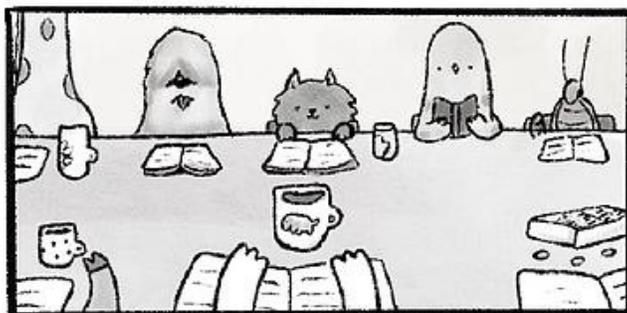
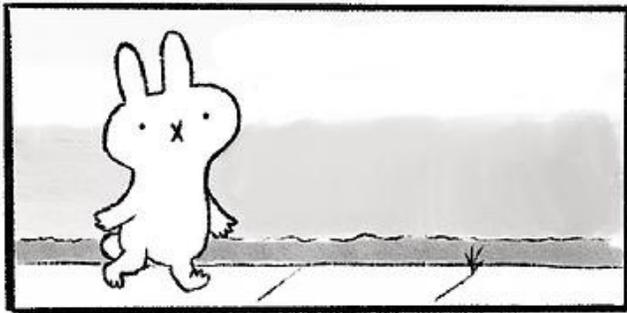
"I've always liked webcomics. I loved A Softer World, Dino Comics, Achewood. The early 2000s – when I was in high school/college – had a big burst of webcomic creation because it was easier than ever to publish for yourself online. (Many of those artists I loved have gone on to great careers in animation and illustration.) I had a long commute for a job I didn't like and wound up drawing on my phone while on the bus. There's a free app called Tayasui Sketches and I used that. I started drawing a rabbit because I like drawing animals. They're always fun and evocative. I decided to do some comic strips about one, thinking I'd update every now and then. A few weeks later, I was hit by a car while crossing the street. Because of my broken foot, I had a lot of time to draw and it slowed me down and made me re-focus my efforts. When the pandemic hit and my latest tour and shows got canceled overnight, I really got fixated. Thus, Sober Rabbit went from a once a week thing (for fun) to now my main occupation!"

How long have you been a webcomic artist for?

"I published journal comics online in 2011 or 2012 on Tumblr, but Sober Rabbit is my first effort to really serialize a story. So — only a few years now."

What is your preferred artistic medium and software you use for comic creation?

"I use an iPad and Apple Pencil and it's spoiled me so bad. I draw in Procreate and — if necessary — edit in Clip Studio Paint EX on my old Mac laptop. All of that is way affordable and I'll say as much as possible that you don't even need those fancy tools to make stuff. It just makes it easier. Like, I correct my bad handwriting a lot."



Do you have any additional work/jobs outside of creating comics/art?

"So many. I freelance web design, graphic design, audio transcription, copy writing, and proofreading. Beyond comics, I'm lucky to have gotten a lot of work from my fellow Chicago comedians and theatre people who need posters, album covers, and merch designed for them. In a perfect world, I would just work on my book but the reality — as someone newly disabled, whose main industry was decimated by the pandemic, I need all the side work I can get."

What is the biggest struggle you have faced as a webcomic artist?

"There's a lot of tedium around publishing comics online. Drawing comics — even ones as simple as mine — takes a while. I have to resize my original drawings to fit Instagram, then make sure my word bubbles are legible for that small size. I schedule posts, advertise my Threadless and Big Cartel stores, and respond to messages/comments. If I didn't have to spend time responding to store orders — in some magic future world, I'd have an intern I'd pay so well!!! — I'd have more time to draw. And more than that, if I was paid a living wage for drawing, I wouldn't have to balance side gigs then frantically draw comics late at night!"

What would you say has been your biggest achievement as a webcomic artist?

"Since Sober Rabbit is about recovery, I've been so humbled that sober people reach out to me a lot and say it's helped for them to read about my struggles. As a recovering alcoholic, I still have a lot of shame about what my life was like up until I got sober. When people DM me and say it's given them hope that they can recover, it makes my day. I've been surprised how often I get kind messages. And readers who really keep up with the comic. Every time something bad happens to Brenda, people write me with concern! They love her! That's so nice."

Is there a specific artist or comic that you have looked to for inspiration?

"I still love Achewood. I can't believe it's online still and you can read the whole thing. I think the artist – Chris Onstad – wasn't a very confident artist so he did simple line work. That's what I did, too, just so it would be easier for me to finish. His strips are absurd and hilarious and if you read it from start to finish, it will melt your brain. You'll always remember it because all the jokes are so weird and the characters are so strong. Lie Bot is one of the great villains of fiction. I currently love several indie artists who are way more talented and disciplined than me – Ohio for Sale (John Allen), Goiter Comics (Josh Pettinger) are two great ones you can read in parts on Instagram. I love the violence and inkiness of Hyena Hell's work. My husband introduced me to the work of Grickle (Graham Annabel), who does comics and animation and is just unbelievably good at conveying horrifying stories with very simple lines. Outside of webcomics, I adore every x-rated, adorable comic by Dave Cooper. His sense of color and line work is unreal. I also recently have gotten obsessed with Brecht Evens, whose colorful stuff is kind of the opposite of what I do – beautiful patterns, interesting and complex structure. Nick Drnaso's "Sabrina" is probably the best thing I've read in the past ten years."

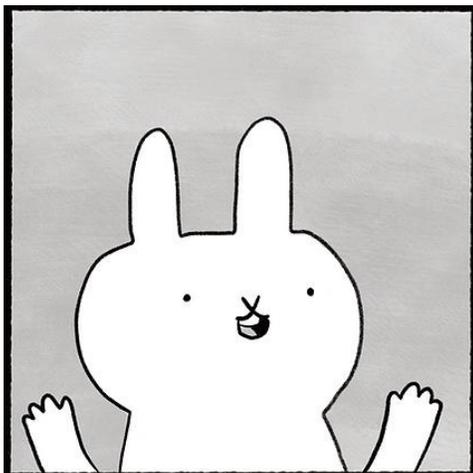
Do you have any advice for those who wish to become a webcomic artist such as yourself?

"Draw all the time. It's so annoying to hear that but trust me – drawing is step one in making any comics. Ya gotta do it. Also, read all the time. Read stuff that is out of your comfort zone and in a different language than you're used to. So many free comics via the library apps, like Hoopla and Libby, if you're in America. Hit up the library and request an inter library loan. They'll ship comics to your library! Reading and looking at how other people draw is how you'll get better. Since I draw more than I ever did before, I'm getting better. I'm not even that good but look at my stuff from 2019 vs. 2021. It just takes time."

If you could say one thing to your past self, before becoming a webcomic artist, what would it be and why?

"FINISH SOMETHING!", I would say.

I talked myself out of so many projects because I never felt I was good enough. A little bit of bad feedback crushed me. An ex talked down to me a lot because I didn't know how to draw digitally because I couldn't afford the tools. Now I know that it doesn't matter. How good other people are isn't important. It's not a competition. You're really just competing against your own expectations. Keep going!



We at CCT336 Magazine would like to thank Whitney Wasson for participating in this exclusive interview and urge you all to check out their work on their socials and sites provided above.

