

# Finding comic art on the streets

Inspired by Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, two local filmmaker-hopefuls are creating a "gritty, real and raw" depiction of life on the streets, in comic form.

After two and a half years of hard work, writers and local film industry workers Kevin Leeson and Todd Ireland have put out the first three issues of their six-issue comic series, *Outnumbered*.

Although it's a fictional work, the fact is the issues are the same. I've lived in Vancouver for a long time and the Downtown Eastside is pretty legendary. It's something that locals have to live with and understand on a daily basis," Leeson said.

Described as "pure action with a little bit of social commentary", the series aims to give teenage comic book fans a reality-based storyline

with all the super heroes and so-called villains of more traditional comic story arcs.

"Here we are in Canada with a real live

Gotham City happening right in front of us. The message is that there are many factors that come into drug use and abuse," said Ireland, a Metis

writer who moved to Vancouver from Regina a few years ago.

"It's not just cut and dried that the drug dealers in our story are



- Photo illustration Rob Kruyt, 24 hours

Artists Kevin Leeson, left, and Todd Ireland have incorporated the Downtown Eastside in to their comic book *OutNumbered*.

the enemies a lot of them are victims of socio-economic factors. The dealers, the city and the system they're all flawed, and sometimes the heroes have to get their hands a little dirty to do something good."

So although the language is harsh and the drawings hold back nothing about reality on the streets, "there's a positive message buried in there. Talking about the harsh realities in which we live is educational," Leeson said.

The first three issues of the six-issue series are available online at [www.criticalhitcomics.com](http://www.criticalhitcomics.com) for \$4.95 a piece.

Leeson and Ireland will also be at the Comix & Stories Convention August 27 at Heritage Hall (3102 Main Street).

-Robyn Stubbs, 24 hours