



Comixology First, give us the obligatory plot summary. What's Contraband about, and who are the major characters? TJ Behe: Working at a run-down Internet cafe in North London, mobile fanatic Toby is stuck helping "social laggards" who still need computers to communicate and access video content. Bored, ambitious and unable to suppress his desire to film sensational events, Toby captures an illegal content deal using his camera phone. But when he's caught in the act by the entrepreneur Tucker, Toby is then forced to hunt down Charlotte, a female activist who has been sabotaging Tucker's cell-phone channel Contraband. Toby eventually finds Charlotte, he's completely mesmerized by the charismatic and assertive activist who's dead keen to highlight the dangers of mobile video abuse. Toby becomes sympathetic to her agenda, and his objectives begin to blur. But when Tucker finds out... Comixology: In reading Contraband, one of the first comparisons that comes to mind is "A Clockwork Orange". It's a world where kids have taken to committing random acts of violence in order to entertain themselves. Could you tell us about the influences that went into Contraband? And, what inspired you to tell this story? TB: The idea came about while working on a user-generated project at a UK mobile operator. Some sneaky kid had upskirting a woman on an underground train and posted the clip on our network. So while top management were blowing their nut and the tech team began implementing an age-verification layer, I was thinking how some nasty bloke could probably offer a good revenue share to motivate sh*t-disturbing kids to send in more. I thought up this violent channel called Contraband, a sort of "urban theatre", where youths prowling city streets secretly film strangers then post sensational, erotic and violent mobile videos. So men can no longer shower in gyms. Women in dresses avoid seats on trains. Teens run daily exhibitionist mobile blogs featuring candid clips of close friends and family members. User-generated mobile spy-cam content becomes big business as society demands increasingly radical videos. But it's also tough to police corrupt individuals like Tucker because it's not in the mobile operator's best interest to do so. They've beaten the government (ID card), internet community portals and banks in the race to create robust personal profile to track people, sell them products, invade their privacy for commercial gain. So it all kind of spirals out of control... Comixology: How did the two of you come to work on this together? Phil Elliott: It started with an email from Thomas. He was looking for an artist to work on a new book and asked whether I'd care to draw some sample pages. He liked what I did, and a year later, Contraband is finished. Hmm, that makes the process sound so simple! It wasn't all plain sailing and I realised quite early on that, with my other commitments, I wasn't going to be able to complete all the drawing on my own. So I called upon the services of Ian Sharman, who took over the inking. Ian's partner at Orangutan Comics, Cherie Donovan also helped with the tones. Comixology: TJ, what are your comic book influences? How did you get into writing comics/graphic novels? TB: Contraband is the first comic I've created. Although I had written the story (many times over) before approaching Phil, the script was still pretty choppy. Phil was a real professional in helping identify key areas for panel development improvement. My influences? I like reading all sorts of indie comics but I guess my writing is more influenced from cool foreign-language flicks.