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Comic Expo premieres in Verde Valley


 Tom Tracey
CV Bugle Managing Editor

The folks at the Cottonwood Library and the Northern Arizona Cartoonist Association say it best: "Love comic stories and art? This event is for you!" They join forces April 9 to host the first ever Verde Valley Comic Expo at the Cottonwood Recreation Center.

"I think it's going to be really great for our community. So many people are interested in pop culture. And a lot of people are going to be dressed in costume, which is great," said Anne Roberts of the Cottonwood Library. Money raised will benefit the summer reading program.

Professional comic artists David Beaty and Jan Marc Quisumbing tested the local interest in comics last October by throwing a benefit comic book show at Cottonwood's Cornerstone Church. The result was a parking lot jammed with cars and art showcased by national-caliber artists.

Beaty's portfolio includes DC and Marvel Comics. He has worked on Batman, Inc. (New York Times Best Seller), Flashpoint: Wonder Woman, Brightest Day (New York Times Best Seller) and Justice League of America. Currently, he is working on the sci-fi humor web comic Red Skirts.

Quisumbing is West Coast Art Director for Pronto Comics. His work includes The Adventures of Pogi Boy and Big Brown Monkey, Lucha Bear, El Masked Oso de Justicia and Time Shark. He also volunteers at school events to share his techniques.

Having the benefit of last fall's "scrimmage" event, the "Dynamic Duo" now feel they are ready for the "big game" - - and so does the library.

"There's going to be a lot to do and different channels to attend. We'll have the Art Store from Prescott, Cab Comics from Flagstaff, Samurai Comics, Drawn to Comics, Monster Comics and more. Executive Producer Eric Alexander from a sci-fi film called 'Occupants' is showing clips on one of our panels," Roberts said. "And people who arrive in costume will be entered in a special raffle."



David Beaty, who worked as a DC and Marvel Comic artist, signs autographs at a fund raiser he and Jan Marc Quisumbing organized last year in Cottonwood. (Courtesy photo)

If You Go ...

What: Verde Valley Comic Expo

Where: Cottonwood Recreation Center, 150 S. 6th St., Cottonwood, AZ 86326

When: Saturday, April 9 from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

How Much: \$5 admission fee or \$3 with donation of two canned goods. Kids under 10 free.

Contact: Anne Roberts, Cottonwood Library by phone 928-340-2788 or e-mail

ctwlibpt@cottonwoodaz.com

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A cast of creatives will be showcased, including artists (such as Marvel and DC Comics artist Marat Mychaels of Deadpool Corps" and Cottonwood's Danny Roberts "Atomic Cattle"); publishers (such as Ricky Killingsworth of "The First Light"); writers (such as Dez Demise of Pronto Comics and Michael Gallagher of "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "Mad Magazine's Spy vs. Spy") and all-around artists (such as Cottonwood's Russ Kazmiercsak, Jr. of "Amazing Arizona Comics" and local Ryan McMurry of "Zombie B.C.).

To learn more, we did a Q&A with Quisumbing:

Q: How did last year's show at Cornerstone Church prepare you for this year's event?

A: "Much like Tony Stark upgrades his Iron Man armor with each movie, we learned from our mistakes and upgraded how we went about doing this year's show. We made it a point to have a monthly meeting with the library to clearly define what the goals and our expectations were for the show.

We went over any and all possible surprises and hiccups that might arise as well as creating a Facebook event page that has more detailed information for attendees.

We did an interview with Cottonwood Mayor Diane Joens earlier this month where we spoke about the event and its goals. The interview on VerdeValley TV has become one of its most viewed (view at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cJnBPN2z0)."

Q: What in particular are you looking forward to this year's event?

A: "I'm excited about the number of artist guests we'll be having. The venue is bigger and so we are able to invite more artists and vendors to come out, many of whom have worked for the bigs like Marvel and DC Comics along with more local area creators. We also have several Cosplay groups coming out. It's cool to think that you can see Aquaman and other members of the Justice League walking around the expo floor, taking pictures with fans and mingling with guests."

Q: What other comic-related events are you planning?

A: "April 9 is the 2nd Saturday Art Walk in Old Town Cottonwood and NAZCA is having an art show at Fire Mountain Wines in Old Town from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. NAZCA members will have sequential art on display for sale and the Jerome Ukulele Orchestra will be performing. And I do Drink and Draw at R.I.O.T. in Old Town Cottonwood on first and third Wednesday nights, as well as free cartooning class at Cottonwood library first Saturdays of the month."



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David Williamson

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