

Welcome to the fourth annual and first live awards ceremony from THE INKWELL AWARDS! I want to sincerely thank **Shelton Drum** and his entire staff. We are thrilled and honored by the generosity and commitment they've shown the last several weeks in offering us the opportunity to be a part of their show, known for its longterm support of comic book community artists. And most-importantly, they are allowing us to fulfill our coveted goal of holding our first *live* awards ceremony *originally* intended for last year by a convention sponsor who we think should be *forever* referred to as "they who must not be named".

For those of you unfamiliar with us, we're the Inkwell Awards. Or the Eisners without the flash and grandeur <g> But *that's* not what we're about anyway. We represent the underdogs of the comic book community, the ink artists, often *misunderstood* in what they do. This is due to the lack of public reference point regarding their title of INKER outside and even within the industry, having been an industry-based creation, originally for the sake of production expediency. As the sole non-profit advocacy for inking, we promote and educate about the craft, the art form, and recognize it's artists and the *quality of work* they add to the creation of comic books. We're not about treating inkers as more-deserving of attention, just deserving of the respect and credit for the work they do.

It used to be that ink artists were credited in solicitations some years ago along with the writer and penciller. This practice has diminished. It used to be that inkers were credited on the covers of reprint collections. This too has changed. Interior credits for inks on reprinted cover art on trades? Not so much anymore. Even in regards to comps, the free samples that artists receive of their printed work, things have changed. Joe Sinnott used to receive hardcovers of his ink work from a publisher and when they stopped arriving he called one day and spoke to an assistant editor who told him that inkers are not important enough to receive those comps. Comps that the writer and penciller receives. It was for that reason that we promptly created The COMPLiments Program where our participating retailers would order such books for Joe and our other Hall of Fame award recipients that we would sponsor. A publisher has every right to re-evaluate and alter their policies at any time, we don't argue that. We do not ever point the finger at any specific company or make any effort to bite the hand that feeds us. But while color artists receive more attention today than they used to, and justifiably so, the presence of the ink artist has subsided.

In a time when the practice of *skipping* the stage of inking, going straight from pencils to colors, became more-commonly used, it seemed obvious that something was different about a decade ago. We are well-aware that the technology is here and comics shouldn't always be made the same way, that other approaches can and should be tried. But while something may save money, not all changes work for the best results all of the time. On inker-centric online forums I read the disappointment and disrespect felt by veteran inkers for the changes. So I decided to target the matter subtly in one of my 'Inkblots' columns in SKETCH magazine in 2007 for the Inkwell Awards, intended for small-scale voting from the readers, in order to bring some recognition to the inkers. This bloomed into an actual organization in January of 2008, one based on a positive message of education and recognition, all of these aspects concentrated for the promotion of the inker

and inking. We have felt enthusiasm and gratitude from the inking community and even from the writers, pencillers, and colorists. Seeing how happy all award recipients have been has been heart-warming and fulfilling after all of the hard work. Dick Giordano received his lifetime-achievement Sinnott Award in 2009 just shortly before his untimely passing. He made the following acceptance statement: *"As I get older, I find I more appreciate having my lifetime accomplishments recognized. It is even more exciting when I am recognized by an award given by a body of my peers!"*

We at the Inkwell Awards felt *so rewarded* to have been a part of giving *back* to him while he was still around to appreciate it.

Now that introductions have been made in regards to who we are, the sooner I get off the stage and let our special guests come up here the better. But it's essential that I give proper kudos and thanks to the many volunteers who are dedicated to this organization and mission as they are what makes it all happen. The core committee runs operations and I recruit them because, honestly, they make me look competent, even brilliant at times. I'm no businessman, accountant, journalist, ...and heck, I'm definitely not a speechwriter (thankfully **Nathan Massengill** salvaged the wreck known as my first drafts). I just set the agenda and make the trains run on time. All smoke & mirrors. The present committee is made up of founding members **Danny Best**, who's based in Australia and couldn't make the ceremony, and **Jimmy Tournas** who's here, as well as attendees **Bob Shaw** and **Nathan**. I also want to thank our ambassadors, the superstars on the front lines who add credibility to the cause and further provides exposure to us: artists **Adam Hughes**, **Mike McKone**, **Sal Velluto**, **Trevor Von Eeden**, and **Mark Brooks**, editor **Mike Marts**, and here in our audience publisher **J. David Spurlock** and artist **Ethan Van Sciver**. We'd also like to welcome aboard *new* ambassador **Cully Hamner** to the team.

We are also excited to have quite a few of our contributors present here such as **Dan Panosian**, who incidentally designed the Inkwell Awards logo, **Louis Small, Jr.**, our Ms. Inkwell live model liaison, **Randy Green**, the visual designer of the Ms. Inkwell character, **Erick Korpi** and **Kris Woodward**, our convention assistants, **Michael Kellar**, our small press and indie artist liaison, **Kim Shaw**, our former auction assistant, and **Kathy Taylor**, our 2011 Heroes Con Ms. Inkwell!

Lastly, I want to give thanks to everyone who's been instrumental in our support and fundraising. This includes all of the promoters who give us comped table space, the bloggers, podcasters and press who've given us exposure, our rotating Nomination Committee who independently select nominees each year for us to tally and place on the ballot, the generous artist community who've donated to us, whether they made out well at a show or not, and the fans who buy our charity-related merchandise and spread our name through word of mouth. I want to especially mention Inkwell contributor **Stacey Aragon** on the west coast who collected many donations at various shows she attended on her own, unsolicited by us, and volunteer **Officer Mike White**, known as 'Off-White' to his friends, who also has committed himself to collecting donations from the artists, being especially successful recently at both Pittsburgh Con and Boston Con. And most-notably **Wade Von Grawbadger** who generously donated to us our highest bid

upon item, the variant cover art to Fear Itself#1 which was sold for \$1000.

Fundraising is our lifeblood and I cannot overemphasize the importance of our donators, collectors, and auctioneers, which include **Bob Shaw**, and more recently **Phil Healy** and **Nathan Massengill**.

Now that I'm done with the *thank-yous*, I want to quickly mention a couple of our *successful programs* this season. First off, I want to announce that our first annual Joe Sinnott Inking Challenge was a success. This program involving Joe allowed us to reproduce his pencil art into larger blues and invite various ink artists to ink them. The effort adds in our goal of educating about what inkers bring to the table by showing before and after images at our ComicArtFans gallery, and it helped raise over \$500 because the artists donated their pieces to our fundraising auctions.

Secondly, this year was the 2nd annual distribution of the Dave Simons Inkwell Memorial Scholarship Fund at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon & Graphic Art for \$1000. This program has allowed us to give back to the community and honor traditional inking as Dave preferred since the applicants are tested by the school for this skill. For 2010, the first recipient was student **Carli Idhe**. This year it was recently announced at their awards ceremony on May 13 to be student **Angela Fernet**. Dave's sister **Bette Simons** gave the following statement:

My most heartfelt congratulations to Angela Fernet, this year's recipient of the Dave Simons Inkwell Memorial Scholarship. Once again, a young, talented female artist has been awarded for her hard work, determination and commitment.

I know that Dave would be thrilled and I want thank everyone who made this scholarship presentation a success again this year. With your continued efforts we are able to memorialize Dave while granting an opportunity for another artist to develop their talent.

I wish Angela a lifetime of success and prosperity.

The Inkwells want to thank **Mike Chen**, **Joe Kubert** and the Kubert School for this shared information and for the continuation of this wonderful partnership in Dave's name.

And now I'd like to present to the podium the artist who's work can be found in the upcoming Conan: Road of Kings, Thunder Agents and doing covers for Green Lantern: Emerald Warriors, The Urban Barbarian himself, **Dan Panosian** as our Keynote Speaker!

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Thanks a lot, Dan! Before I bring up our Awards Presenter I wanted to note that we've had a few members depart the organization over time, no different than other organizations, such as founding members **Tim Townsend** and **Bill Nichols**, **Dave Simons** who passed away while a part of us, and later **Kris Fenol**. All core committee members are given a small gift for their time and participation, a silver

inkwell trophy. Today, we have another special one to give. This committee member was a friend and later my art rep before I asked him to act as auctioneer contributor in 2008 early in our founding, and he was later in the year the first contributor to ever be *promoted* to the *core* committee. In that three years of service, he established the key aspects to the organization's fundraising program that we still use to this day. He was our auctioneer for just about the entirety of his term, many times setting up auctions at the spur of the moment and running them back to back for weeks at a time. He created our Inkwell Awards forum so we could efficiently connect with our audience and use the venue as a spot where learning and veteran inkers could hang out and talk shop. He set up both our MySpace page and our CAF gallery where we could post our donations online. When we couldn't agree on a name for our new small press and independent ink artist category on the ballot, it was this person who coined The S.P.A.M.I. for **Small Press And Mainstream Independent**. He brought in Nathan Massengill to the committee and produced our first donation drive book. And it was he who conceived of a scholarship fund in the memory of Dave Simons. Not bad. Ultimately, this was the year that other factors, other priorities took precedence in his life and he knew it was time to move on. But he's left a fine legacy that the Inkwells will build upon. I am now proud to present this silver inkwell to, still my friend, **Bob Shaw!** Come on up, Bob!

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Thanks, Bob! With all endings there are beginnings so I'd also like to announce that two Inkwell contributors have recently accepted my request to step up to the core committee and that's social networks contributor **Stacey Aragon** who's not here today and will jump aboard officially later in the year to assist with fundraising, and **Michael Kellar** who's here today who will in addition of his other duties, assist **Nathan** and **Phil** as an auctioneer. Feel free to stand and take a bow, Michael! Yes, Bob, now you can gloat that it took two people to fill your absent spot!

And with that concluded, I'd like to introduce a 2009 two-time Inkwell Awards award recipient for the Most-Adaptable award and the S.P.A.M.I. award, a former but founding Inkwell committee member, and who's ink art can be found gracing the pages of X-men and Amazing Spider-man, our Presenter, T-dog **Tim Townsend!**

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Thanks, Tim! Another round of applause for our winners! We will now allow the audience a chance to ask our award recipients any questions and if you would like to take group or individual photos, this would be the best time. I also ask that, if possible, you do not leave the ceremony now or after the Q&A and to remain and enjoy and/or bid in the live charity auction to follow hosted by **Ethan Van Sciver** and organized by **Jim Tournas**.

XX <Q&A/PHOTOSHOOT>

And now, I'd like to introduce Inkwell ambassador, our 2011 Live Auction

Auctioneer, and the finest singer/songwriter of his generation, artist **Ethan Van Sciver!**

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Thanks, Ethan! That ends our first live awards ceremony and auction. FYI, we will now have our new 2011 Inkwell Awards Heroes Con Donation Drive book for sale on our table in artist alley for a \$15 donation while supplies last. I'd like to again thank **Shelton Drum** and the Heroes Con and especially thank you all for coming and we look forward to seeing you again next year!