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WCG Wins Prestigious Xeric Grant!

WCG Comics has been awarded a grant from the Xeric Foundation to support the publication of Adventure Strip Digest, an action-adventure comic-book series featuring Rob Hanes, which cartoonist Randy Reynaldo has been self-publishing since 1990.

"Given the quality of past recipients, I'm proud to be named to this prestigious award," said Reynaldo, "I'm very grateful for the support for my work that this grant represents."

The Xeric Foundation was founded by Peter A. Laird, co-creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, one of the biggest success stories in self-published comics, for the purpose of assisting comic book creators with some of the costs in self-publishing their work. Grants are awarded for a maximum of \$5000.

Most of the funds will be used to generate awareness for the series among readers and retailers. This will include prominent ads and a newsletter. According to Reynaldo, everyone who has seen the series has been impressed by Adventure Strip Digest and enjoys it, but given the enormous amount of product currently available in the marketplace, it has been difficult raising awareness for the series with limited resources.

"Given the concern expressed by the mainstream press and audiences about the lack of 'positive'

heroes in today's comics, Rob Hanes is part of a growing movement in the marketplace for more accessible and fun comic-books, like Wolff and Byrd and Bone," said Reynaldo. "Rob Hanes is aimed at a broad, general audience and many fans of the series include industry pros who are familiar with the classic adventure strips as well as younger readers who are looking for something fun and different."

Rob Hanes is set in the modern day and follows the adventures of a private investigator who works for Justice International, a private detective agency with branch offices worldwide. As a globetrotting troubleshooter, Rob takes on a wide range of assignments from individuals and companies, and also frequently engages in freelance work for U.S. intelligence. (He has also recently taken on a partner, Abner McKenna, who is an older, more easygoing foil for the younger and more impulsive Rob.) This backdrop gives Reynaldo an opportunity to write and draw a diversity of stories and adventures set in some of the most exotic and dangerous locales in the world. Past stories have taken place in the Middle East, Russia, Paris, and Hong Kong. In addition to straight adventure, Reynaldo also hopes to tackle other kinds of story genres, including romantic comedies, murder mysteries, and human drama.

"Rob Hanes is intended as a character-oriented adventure-variety series," said Reynaldo. "I want to do light humor as much as straight adventure, and I've covered several serious subjects already, including the emerging black market in Russia and industrial espionage in Western Europe."

Many reviewers have compared the series to Indiana Jones, Jonny Quest, Tintin, Terry and the Pirates, and The Spirit. Reynaldo's art has been also likened to the work of master comic-strip storytellers like Milton Caniff and Alex Toth. It has received positive reviews and coverage in the Comic Buyer's Guide, Wizard, Previews, and Indy.

Adventure Strip Digest began in 1990 as a self-published fanzine. Due to the overwhelmingly positive response, however, Reynaldo turned the series into a self-published comic-book in 1994. Three issues of the three-times-a-year publication have been published to date. In keeping with the brisk pace of the series, all stories are self-contained and complete in each issue.

In order to plan for the most effective use of the grant, Reynaldo said that Adventure Strip Digest #4 has been postponed to develop a campaign to promote the series and the award.

"The timing of the grant couldn't be better," said Reynaldo. "Now that I've found a permanent

home for Rob Hanes in Adventure Strip Digest, I was planning to strengthen continuity and introduce changes in the series for readers — and this award will help bring attention to the new direction!"

The grant is particularly unique in that it is being awarded to support an ongoing series rather than a completely new project. According to Reynaldo, he had initially thought about applying for the grant when he began self-publishing the series as a full-sized comic-book in late 1994, but because of his last-minute decision to enter the market, decided to wait for a more appropriate opportunity to apply for a grant.

"I have to admit, I was fairly confident about getting an award since I know my work has a reputation for high quality," said Reynaldo. "I spend a lot of time on researching my stories, props and locales."

Reynaldo believes that his experience of having already published several issues of the series will enable him to use the grant effectively and bring attention to his current work which has shown continued maturity and improvement since the series debuted last year.

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