

ARTS & CULTURE

How to be an adult and still collect comics

BY REBECCA PORTER

CALGARY (CUP) — There are ideas that our parents were raised with. Ideas like graduating from school, leaving home when you are 18, finding a good job and retiring with a pension.

These ideas don't really hold true anymore and more frequently people are finding that in order to do what they want to do they have to make their own jobs.

Such was the case with Kelly Dowd, owner of Calgary-based Redd Skull Comics and CDs.

"At the time that I bought the store, around 1993, the economy wasn't that great, they said that there were jobs but there weren't really," says Dowd. "So I created my own job."

Dowd first began his romance with comics as a young boy in 1976. He was sitting at the bus station, bored with listening to his dad talk shop, so he read a comic and drank chocolate milk. That afternoon of reading lead him to become an avid comic collector.

As Dowd grew older, he continued collecting comics. But, as many of us know, you hit a certain

age when you have to start acting like a grown-up and making grown-up plans for the future.

Dowd decided he wanted to be a financial planner.

He moved to Calgary from Regina in 1993 with four years of university experience in Arts and Economics. He was taking a Securities course and working nights when he heard about a comic store that was for sale. He jumped at the opportunity.

"There were two choices of what I wanted to do in life. One was to be a financial planner, deal in stocks, bonds, and trading. The other thing I wanted to do was sell comic books," says Dowd. "Besides, as a friend pointed out, running a comic book store is similar to the stock market because there are high and low end comics and a lot of speculation about what books will do well."

When Dowd bought the store there were over 30 stores in Calgary, at last count 10 remain. The competition was steep, but he didn't think twice.

"It was a quick buy, an immediate decision: Do I do it or not? Do I take the risk or not?"

The risk paid off for Dowd, this last March he celebrated his fifth year in business. He didn't jump through the regular hoops that most entrepreneurs do and instead chose to take a more practical approach with his business.

"Everyone says you have to have a business plan. I never had one but I knew how things ran from previous part-time work experience in a book store and I modeled my store after their store."

It wasn't all easy for Dowd. Admittedly, there were trials when he started the business, such as buying too much of the wrong stock and having to work another job for the first two years to support the store.

However, with the support of family and friends Dowd managed to overcome his initial setbacks.

"Everyone I knew that was connected to comic books had faith in me. If people have faith in me then I know I will do alright."

Another aspect that allows Dowd's business to thrive is good financial sense.

"You have to make sure you have enough money, more than you think you should have. Always

have extra money in case you screw up, and then you can fall back on it."

When starting your own business, it is important to maintain a balance in your life and not let running the business take over your entire life.

"Most people think they can run a store or a business, but they don't realize how involved you have to be," says Dowd. "I just can't take a holiday whenever I want to, I always have to arrange to bring someone in. But I have always arranged to take one day a week off."



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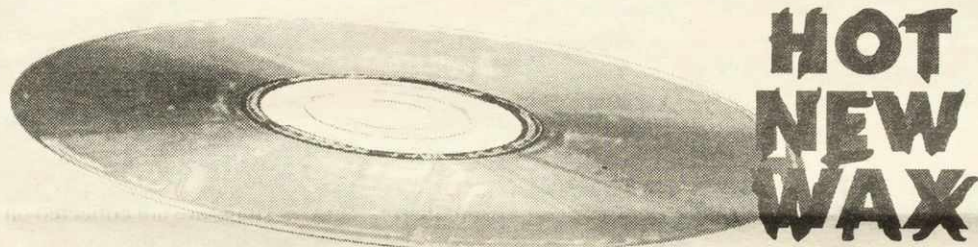
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The Misfits — Famous Monsters

(Sesame Street Records)

After 22-some years, the Misfits are still growing stronger. Like the previous release, *American Psycho*, *Famous Monsters* lacks the distinctive vocals of Glan Danzig — but still manages to hold onto their punkish monster rock. A definite buy for any Misfit fan, this release may be misunderstood by virgin ears. — Kathy.

Sinclair — self titled

(Sonic Unyon)

Re-releasing their debut ep after signing with Sonic Unyon, Sinclair has sweetened the deal by adding two new tracks onto this record. Cranking out a rock that whispers Jimmy Eat World and The Get Up Kids in your ears, Sinclair is catchy and loveable for the whole family — or at least the hip strain of your family. With the epic track "Wind is the sound of the crying," the band gives assurance that the post-hardcore world (emo you say?) is a friendly place indeed. — Jon.

Crooked Fingers — self titled

(Sonic Unyon)

There can be no denying Eric Bachmann's place in the indie-rock world. The immediately placeable Archers of Loaf frontman's voice takes on its customary depth and rawness as Crooked Fingers. But this time instead of rock songs, Eric Bachmann is brewing up dark lyrical pieces that are a blend of lounge rock and "drunken beer hall rants." This record is solid, and one that will age well. — Jon.

Various Artists — Celebrity Deathmatch

(Interscope)

Basically, this CD just sucks. I can't think of a prettier way to put it. Dim sparks from Eminem and Liars Inc. earned this CD two points while it's ashes cooled in my garbage can, and it earned the other 0.5 points for a mildly humorous cover, done in oh-so-original clay figures. — Joel.