~ Life in LAMORINDA

The entrepreneurial endeavors of one local comic book creator

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permission to move forward.

forefront," he says, "just as I

initially promised the Clokey

Gumby team won the coveted

Eisner Award, often referred

Eventually, Smith felt he

to as the Academy Award of

had "come to the end of the

done everything I could with

Next from Smith's cre-

Ahead," a zombie on the wa-

scribed it as, "An original spin

characters, knockout artwork

and a promising premise and

so popular, in fact, that AMC

"Fear of the Walking Dead" TV

apparently produced their

series using storylines from

Smith's comics. In a lawsuit

filed by Smith in 2018, he al-

Walking Dead" TV show were

comic. Several months later, a

details are confidential, Smith

dealt with personal problems, serious health issues and

spent many years caregiving a

A documentary on the

loved one. Through it all, he

kept coming back to his pas-

late Todd Loren, creator of

Rock N Roll comics, a line of

comic book rock star biogra-

phies, presented Smith with

"I knew many Bay Area

his next creative opportunity.

bands, knew how to publish

comics and saw a void in this

arena so I decided to give it a

band Smith wrote about was

This rock n roll series, like most of Smith's other endeav-

shot," he declares. The first

Slayer, an American thrash

ors, have become popular

me now, requesting that I

"Becoming Frankenstein."

up Frankenstein?" Smith

asked. He has and is now

producing a series which

provided them.

gives the back stories on the

Frankenstein's various body

parts and the individuals that

As if all this creating,

enough to keep Smith busy, he

writing and illustrating isn't

has just formed 10 Ton Press

cover their group," he states.

Smith is quite excited

about his newest publication,

"Have people ever won-

dered whose body parts make

among comic book readers. "I

even have bands approaching

metal band.

sion for comics.

During the years, Smith

is pleased with the outcome.

lifted from his "Dead Ahead"

deal was struck and the law-

suit resolved. Although the

leged that large portions of

season two's "Fear of the

It became quite popular;

ter story. One reviewer de-

lypse/survival genre. Vivid

road with Gumby, having

ative mind came "Dead

on the Zombie Apoca-

the comics industry.

it," he explains.

story.'

family I would." He and his

Smith put Gumby "back in the

Comic book writer/artist/publisher Mel Smith points out his Metallica Rock N Roll comic.

By Diane Claytor

As a boy growing up in Sunnyvale, Mel Smith, like most kids his age, read comic books. He liked them a lot. As an adult now living in Orinda, Smith still likes comic books. Actually, he more than likes them. He earns his living writing, drawing, producing and publishing them. His work has been praised, won awards, and now there is talk about making a movie based on his latest comic, "Becoming Frankenstein."

Years ago, the teen-aged Smith went to a comic book convention in San Jose. "I got bit by the bug to write and draw my own," he remembers fondly. He started hanging out in comic book stores. acknowledging that owners of two different shops took him under their wings. He became passionate about learning everything he could about the process of putting together a comic book and began going to more shows, talking to more people, drawing more pictures and writing more stories.

At 16 years old, Smith produced his first comic book, "Messiah." with Pinnacle Comics. It received considerable attention and he "actu-

ally got paid," Smith notes. Basically self-taught, Smith went to work for Marvel Comics and Spike and Mike's Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation. The young Smith soon hit some major bumps and spent time in rehab, after which he decided to leave the comic book world and try his hand at something else. But the pull was too strong and he soon returned to his first love.

Smith attended ComicCon, the massive annual gathering dedicated to comics and related art forms. He started talking to colleagues again and produced "Feed America's Children," a 48-page original superhero story, with every page illustrated by a different known comic artist.

One day, his mind wandering, Smith remembered Gumby, the green clay humanoid character created in the early 1950s that went on to become a TV celebrity in the 1960s. "It was one of the characters I loved as a kid," Smith remembers.

By the early 2000s, Gumby had all but disappeared. But not in Smith's mind. A light bulb went off: how about a Gumby comic book series. Conversations, negotiations and deals between Art Clokey, Gumby's creator, and Smith took place before Smith was granted

which will produce color comics from different creators. In addition to "Becoming Frankenstein," 10 Ton Press is developing "Charlie and Humphrey" comics, featuring the madcap adventures of the legendary puppets, as well as the superhero "Red Dawn" comic series. "We'll have something for everyone," Smith promises.

Previews of these new comics will be available on Free Comic Book Day, Aug. 14, at your favorite comic book stores.



The preview of comics being produced by Mel Smith's 10 Ton Press.

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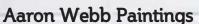
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