

Hello folks,

I'm Christopher Butcher and I'm the Festival Director and co-founder of TCAF, The Toronto Comic Arts Festival. Co-founder Peter Birkemoe, a handful of staff, and dozens of volunteers and I present TCAF every two years in lovely downtown Toronto, Canada. A little over a month ago on May 9-10, 2009, we held our fourth Festival. It was a first at our new home, the Toronto Reference Library, the flagship of the 99-branch Toronto Public Library system (the largest library system in North America). Following tradition, we thought a nice note sent far and wide might be a good way to sum up this year's Festival, and make a few announcements about the next one.

First and foremost, we think that TCAF 2009 was a great success. Our main goal with TCAF is to create a stage for the comics, art and graphic novels that we love, so they can really shine and find the audience that they deserve. Canada is a country that produces great cartoonists and comics and we're proud that more than 250 creators, a dozen publishers, and more attendees than ever could participate in this year's Toronto Comic Arts Festival. **Despite economic concerns, TCAF 2009 proved that comics are still a boom medium, bursting with creativity, craft, and passion—and people want to come out and be a part of it!**

Attendance at TCAF 2009 events more than doubled over our 2007 figures, with 10,500 TCAF-specific attendees visiting Toronto Reference Library across both days (official numbers, at that: from audited data provided by Toronto Public Library's turnstile powers-that-be), and with over 14,000 attendees visiting TCAF-branded events in total. Feedback from guests, attendees, and partners has been overwhelmingly positive so far. While we did experience some growing pains this year (heat, crowds, traffic-flow) familiarizing ourselves with and settling in to the new venue, we're confident that moving forward we'll be able to rectify these issues.

On that note, we'd like to thank all of the wonderful cartoonists, publishers, artists and writers who came out to exhibit this year. **TCAF 2009 featured our largest and most diverse collection of guests to date, and as always these creators and their work are the reason there is a Festival in the first place.** Thanks to our honored guests François Ayroles, Anke Feuchtenberger, Emmanuel Guibert, Derek Kirk Kim, Kid Koala/Eric San, Scott McCloud, Tara McPherson, Bryan Lee O'Malley, Paul Pope, Florent Ruppert, Seth, Adrian Tomine, and Craig Yoe. And a very special thanks especially to Mr. and Mrs. Yoshihiro Tatsumi, who overcame medical troubles to attend this Festival: you gave us a truly special event.



We've continued to receive amazing support from both Canada's national and Toronto's local print and online media, with many of our guests surprised at the level of coverage that we received both as an event, and around specific guests. Of particular note is the superlative support of the Arts & Life section of Canada's National Post newspaper, who ran **over a hundred biographies and Q&As** of comics creators attending TCAF, several feature articles and art pages, blog and print wraps and updates -- they even live-Tweeted several panels. We appreciate their support of comics and their recognition of TCAF's prominent role in promoting the medium. These efforts, alongside coverage from TCAF Media Sponsor Eye Magazine, newspapers The Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail and L'Express, online coverage from BoingBoing, Torontoist, BlogTO, NOW, Publishers Weekly, Quill and Quire, Sequential, Walrus, The Comics Reporter, dozens of blogs, thousands of tweets, and the fine folks at Open Books Toronto and WHAZAMO! declaring May GRAPHIC NOVEL MONTH, created unprecedented awareness not only of TCAF, but of the hundreds of publishers and cartoonists at the event. **Thank you!**

Peter and I would like to thank all of our sponsors and partner organizations, and especially TCAF Presenting Sponsor, Toronto Public Library (TPL). TPL graciously donated the use of the beautiful, airy Toronto Reference Library building to act as our venue for the main exhibition and programming. **Holding TCAF at Toronto Reference Library re-enforces the fact that TCAF is completely FREE for the public to attend.** We've long maintained that making the show free removes the barriers to entry for anyone who might be interested in the medium of comics and graphic novels, and by partnering with an organization that offers free access to a fantastic, comprehensive collection of the best comics literature all year-round, we've found a great partner in our goals. TCAF strives to present a broad, accessible, and varied view of comics and it is with the support of TPL and their staff—particularly tireless Director of Communications Ab Velasco—that we were able to reach more people with our message than ever before. Thank you. Thanks also to our sponsors at Harbourfront Centre, Owlkids, Le Consulate General de France a Toronto, the Goethe-Institut, Eye Weekly, The Japan Foundation, Magic Pony, Teletoon Canada, and of course, The Beguiling Books and Art: You supported us with great guests, with great venues, great programming, and so much more.

As the public face of TCAF, I often get a lot of the credit and praise directed at the event (the complaints too!), but there are a number of people who help put this show together that don't always get the credit they deserve. Foremost amongst those people is Steven Murray (aka Chip Zdarsky), who went above and beyond this year to help us put together weeks and months worth of projects related to the Festival. He is a wonderful artist, writer, designer and friend, and we are sorry for making him uncomfortable with this praise but: We literally could not have done what we did without you.

Thanks also go out to: our 2009 Festival Poster Artist Bryan Lee O'Malley; Emmanuel Guibert for lending us Sardine for our *Comics Festival!* comic; Professor Andrew Lesk for organizing a fantastic academic program; Jocelyne Allen for superb Japanese translation skills; our many programming hosts and moderators including: Bill Kartalopoulos, Deb Aoki, Bart Beaty, Mark Askwith, Mark D. Nevins, Mark Siegel, Douglas Wolk, Jose Villarrubia, Jason Azzopardi, Stacy E. King, Jim Zubkavich, and

Robin McConnell; The hosts and staff of The 2009 Doug Wright Awards for throwing an excellent event Saturday evening; our 2009 Festival Staff including Logistics Coordinators Rob Broughton and Sean Rogers, Kids Programming Coordinators Scott Robins and Naseem Hrab, Volunteer Coordinator Andrew Woodrow-Butcher; Parrish Kilthei for his A/V assistance; the staff of The Beguiling; Kate Dickson from Teletoon Canada; Peggy Burns from Drawn & Quarterly for all of her help coordinating an incredibly busy schedule; and the shrewd advice of Nathalie Atkinson. We had an army of talented, passionate volunteers again this year who helped to ensure that things went as smoothly as they possibly could, and we greatly appreciate their contribution to making the event a success (and that they happily wore the ketchup 'n' mustard-coloured TCAF t-shirts). We hope that all of you will come out and be a part of next year's event.

That's right, the next Toronto Comic Arts Festival will be held Saturday May 8th and Sunday May 9th, 2010, at Toronto Reference Library. YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST. And yes, we know that's Mother's Day... All of the *cool* moms read comics.

What, so soon, you ask? Following up on feedback from our partners, our guests, our staff, and attendees, we've decided to build on the incredible momentum of having a new home and incredibly supportive presenting sponsor in Toronto Public Library, and produce our first annual show. This is something of an experiment for us, and I can't say for sure that we're "going annual" with the event, but we feel that a 2010 event is the best course of action to ensure that TCAF stays a fun, vital, and prominent festival both within the city of Toronto and in the larger comics community. **That's around the corner so we'll be running a tight ship, and further details about TCAF 2010 (including exhibitor application & information) will be released later this summer.**

Thanks again to everyone who made the 2009 Toronto Comic Arts Festival such a fantastic success. We greatly appreciate your support, your promotion of the festival through great word of mouth and online, and your attendance. We'll do our best to keep putting together a great show.

Thanks,

Christopher Butcher, Festival Director
Toronto Comic Arts Festival

On behalf of the executive, staff, and volunteers of TCAF