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## Little Girls, Big Dreams

As most of you know, in my spare time I hold a regular job as the Comics Editor for *Disney Adventures* magazine. Recently, my art assistant Gregory Benton (a true unofficial Friend of Lulu if ever there was one!) and I started a page in *DA* called Junior Comics Zone, for budding cartoonists. Kids send in their one-page comics, we pick the best and run 'em in the magazine. While Greg edits the page, I look over the submissions.

I was going through a big stack of kids' submissions and I was struck by the fact that at least 50% of them were from girls. And at least half, if not more, of the best ones were from girls, some of them elaborate manga-style productions.

This reminded me that not a week goes by that I don't get a letter from a girl with some home-made drawings of Disney characters. All of the letters include a sentence to the following effect: "I love to draw, and my dream is to be an animator/cartoonist when I grow up." A lot of the drawings show real talent.

I remarked on this phenomenon to Greg, and he said he'd noticed it, too.

My question is: **What happens to all these little girls who want to be cartoonists or animators?** If I'm getting this many letters, why are there so few female cartoonists and animators?

Is it a new phenomenon? Is it just since the resurgence of Disney that girls want to be animators? I have no doubt that editors at Marvel and DC get tons of letter from boys who want to grow up to be cartoonists. If you look at the history of comics, many of the medium's

most prominent creators got their starts as teens: Siegel and Shuster, Jim Shooter, Paul Levitz, Marv Wolfman, Len Wein, Rob Liefeld, and on and on.

When that many girls have that many dreams, it's a sure bet that some of them are going to make it, but I've heard too many horror stories not to know that sometimes roadblocks are thrown up where there should be support. I hope that what I'm seeing is a *new* influx of young women with the talent and desire to make their dreams come true, women who won't get caught up in the rigid thinking of the past. The Friends of Lulu have to be there to encourage and mentor these youngsters. It's always been an important part of our mission and will continue to be.

The good news: Trina Robbins, Lee Binswanger, and Lee Marrs are once again teaching monthly seminars in cartooning at the Cartoon Art Museum in San Francisco. The seminars run from April to June. (Call 415-CAR-TOON for info.)

One idea we came up with at the New York chapter is a series of seminars for children at the major conventions, where, with the assistance of professional writers and artists, the kids can pro-

duce their own comics. (And of course, girls AND boys are welcome.) If anyone would like to volunteer at seminars for conventions in various cities this summer, please let us know.

And just to let you know, when I get one of those letters from a kid with a dream, I send out a letter with some hints and a list of art and animation schools. Who knows? That girl just might be the next Wendy Pini or Rumiko Takahashi.

—Heidi MacDonald

## Preliminary Survey Results

Since the convention season ended, Cheryl Harris has been tackling the daunting task of compiling all the data gathered from the forms people filled out at the Lulu booth at the consumer shows. In all, we received 923 responses (702 from females, 221 from males) at six shows: Wonder Con, A.P.E., the Small Press Expo, Chicago Comicon, San Diego Comic-Con, and the fall Great Eastern show in New York. Two-thirds of the forms (606) were from the two biggest shows, Chicago and San Diego. The two independent/small press-oriented shows accounted for 6% of the female responses and 27% of the male responses.

We plan to publish the findings for all the questions in a form that will be available to retailers, distributors, FoL members, and other interested parties, but here is a preview of some of the results. (I will focus on the answers that females gave, since the male respondents were not a representative sample of the general male comics-reading audience.)

The key questions on the survey for our purposes were: What are your favorite comic books that you currently purchase or read (up to six choices)? What three comics would you recommend to a teenage girl who doesn't currently read comics? and What three comics would you recommend to an adult female who doesn't currently read comics?

As far as favorite current comics are concerned, females listed over 450 different titles. Even if we cut back the list to titles listed at least 3 times, we are left with over 175 different currently published comics that females say they regularly read. If we make the cutoff point at least 10 mentions, over 50 titles still

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**"My dream is to be an animator/cartoonist when I grow up."**