



## IndieCreator: Insights from a Newbie Comic Creator & Other Industry Pros

*This is a series of bi-weekly columns by Bob Heske @ Heske Horror, creator of [The Night Projectionist](#) and [Cold Blooded Chillers](#), featuring interviews and insights from indie comic artists, writers, creators, distributors and visionaries.*

### *Labor Play: Assembling an End Times Anthology Can Be Fun!*

For Labor Day, I decided to break my string of awesome interviews and give a brief primer on my latest venture: publishing and editing an End Times Anthology with the upbeat title *2012: Final Prayer*. For more on creating this catastrophic project with a cast of global contributors, read on ...

### *What's Up with 2012? And Should I Really Be Worried?*

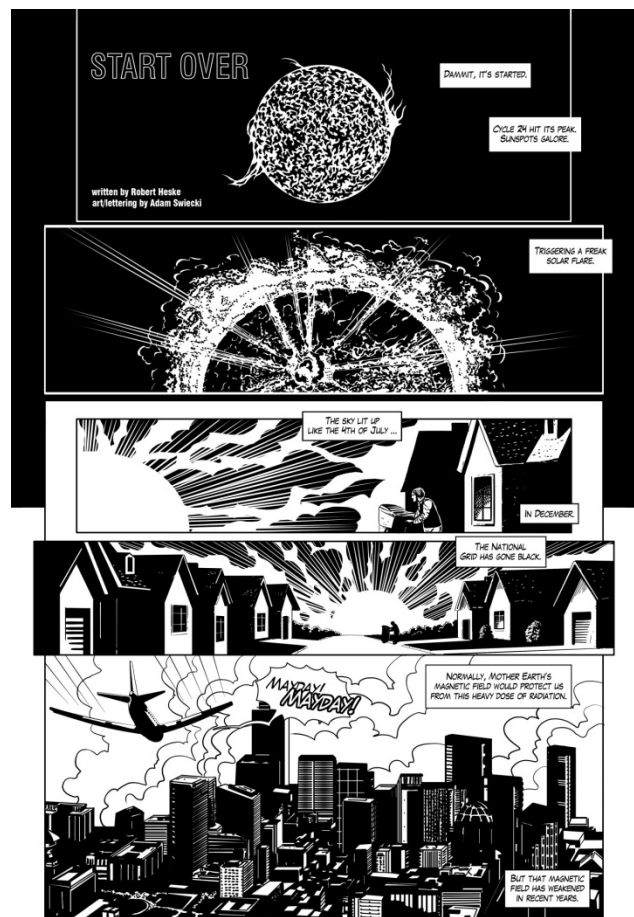
December 21, 2012 at 11:11 GST (that's AM for those in the Eastern Hemisphere) marks the end of the Mayan Long Count calendar. Why should you give a crap?

Here are a few fast facts:

- The Mayan Calendar marks the end of a 5,126 year era
- The Mayan Calendar began in 3114 B.C.
- On 12/21/12 the Sun will be aligned with the Milky Way for the first time in 26,000 years
- The alignment of energy between the stars and the Sun will be disrupted at 11:11 GST

Some think we'll be cued up for a polar shift and the eight ball dropping into the corner pocket just might be the end of. Others foresee a transformative event where humanity has a "consciousness awakening" – a trigger in our DNA that brings us all to a higher level of awareness and togetherness.

Ecstasy, Endgame ... or another Y2K?



Start Over (art by Adam Swiecki)

No one knows, but the premise is intriguing and makes for a great anthology. But even a horror writer such as myself can't concoct all the dire scenarios alone. I needed to find a few other manic depressives like myself ...

### ***Where Do You Find Crazy People to Craft an End Times Comic?***

When I embarked on this anthology my wife was worried. "First you write stories about people murdering people and now you graduate to destroying the whole human race. What kinds of freak are you?" It's no wonder that my 3-year old is suddenly terrified of



Cover art by Preston Asevedo

monsters! (No worries – we've rented Pixar's *Monsters Inc.* from Netflix.)

What made my wife really worried was when she started reading the submissions I was getting from writer/artist teams from around the world. Not just the US, UK and Canada. But Finland, Ireland, Italy, Poland, the Philippines, Scotland and South Africa to boot.

"There really are other people like you out there," she sighed after reading a particularly depressing story where Lucifer took center stage after a hidden code of DNA was suddenly unlocked on 12/21. "I'm changing my name!"

How did I find these dysfunctional characters? Networking! Much thanks goes to Crawford Coutts (a very normal and engaging chap) who heads the fantastic Insomnia Publications

(*Cancertown*, *Layer Zero* anthology, and

*Cages*). Crawford had his Creative Director (the uber-helpful Nichola Wilkinson) send out a call to their contributors and – Voila! – I had more quality submissions than I could shake a crashing comet at.

I also published a bulletin on comicspace.com and made a special page on my website ([www.coldbloodedchillers.com](http://www.coldbloodedchillers.com) > 2012 Anthology) where I posted all the rules and specs. Finally, I contacted a few indie creators that I admired – some ignored me, but a few said "yes." Suddenly, I was off to the races.

### *Another Anthology? (How To Make Yours Truly Cataclysmic)*

Seems like everyone is doing an anthology these days. And 2012 is generating a lot of buzz – just go to Amazon and do a search for “2012” to see what turns up. I wanted my book to be different. So I decided to break it into two parts – what happens on “the day” and what happens on “the day after”. I also enlisted best-selling 2012 book authors (whose names I found on that Amazon search, thank you very much!) to write brief essays – ranging from very dire to fairly optimistic. Finally, I searched for someone to write the Forward who was tuned into Paranormal Paranoia. (To find out who these people are, meander over to my website.)

Let me tell you – some of the material I received flat-out floored me, and some gave me pause. In putting the book together, I worked with writers and artists who contacted me for input. Others worked in isolation and submitted material from their Bat Cave. In the end, the cream rose to the top. These were stories with unique perspectives ranging from Apocalyptic and “Out There” to Other Dimensions and even a few “Gallows Humor” tales.

I was getting very excited about completing the book, and more nervous about 2012!

#### *The Grand Finale: Lessons Learned*

At this time I am in the home stretch, selecting the final approved submissions, making sure all my deal memos are signed and returned from the creators (a very important step, people!), running the final files past my pre-flight specialist before sending payment (a SMART step), and sending out payment promptly (yes, I did provide modest payment as incentive for the submissions and hired artists to work on my own stories).

Here are some key takeaways for others interested in publishing their own anthology:

- **Pick a compelling theme** – Select a theme that artists gravitate too and will stir unique and intriguing ideas. I was pleased and surprised how many people had heard of 2012 and wanted to do a story on it.



*The Seeds of Time (art by Stephen Broome)*

- **Network to find talent** – Use other publishers you’ve befriended to get the word out. There’s plenty of talent out there and many are stranded on the sidelines waiting to get back into the indie comic game.
- **Give yourself 6 good months** – From start to finish you’ll need a half year to get the word out; the submissions collected, reviewed, and finalized; and the book pre-flighted, printed and promoted.
- **Offer contributors some compensation** – Even in a rough market you should offer some incentive to keep contributors committed. I tied my compensation to the 2012 theme (\$212) and included a contributors’ page listing artist bios to promote them. And, of course, you have to send a complimentary copy to each person – which was expensive for me since  $\frac{3}{4}$  of my creative contributors live overseas (a few hundred dollars worth of international shipping – YIKES!).
- **Build buzz early** – Pre-communicate the anthology in interviews, podcasts, and on your website whenever you can. If you get a “star” contributing to your book, send out a Tweet. Produce an “e-preview” book and post it on MyEbook. And encourage your contributors to post sample artwork and posts on their websites and blogs so their fans will be looking to buy the book when it’s released.

Speaking of building buzz early, *2012: Final Prayer* will be released in late October. Check my website at [www.coldbloodedchillers.com](http://www.coldbloodedchillers.com) for all the gory details and updates.

### ***InvestComics Bonus: Jay Katz’s Favorite “Money” Variant Covers***

My buddy Jay Katz, founder of InvestComics.com and regular contributor to ComicNews.info and Project FanBoy, was tickled pink when he learned *2012: Final Prayer* will feature a Variant cover by UK artist Paul Cartwright (the variant will be for the UK market). Being somewhat of a savant on Variants, Master Katz offered his recommendations for some solid gold investment/collector gems:

- Thor #7 Marko Djurdjevic brings the total dynamic of Thor in this Variant. His emotion, his gear, his hammer ... yes Thor is a badass. We got it Marko!
- Civil War #3 The late Michael Turner turns in this Variant of Spider-Man perched in his new duds. Simply awesome.
- Batman #612 This 2<sup>nd</sup> print sketch was in a short print. Jim Lee explodes with the detail and shows why he might be the best Superman/Batman artist to come around in some time.



Bob Heske is creator of *The Night Projectionist*, a vampire horror series by publisher *Studio 407* with film rights optioned by *Myriad Pictures*. Through his Heske Horror shingle, Bob self-published his critically acclaimed horror series *Cold Blooded Chillers*. Bob's trade paperback *Bone Chiller* (a "best of" CBC anthology) recently won a Bronze medal in the horror category at the 2009 Independent Publisher Book Awards. He is currently working on an *End Times* anthology called "2012: Final Prayer." You can email him at [info@coldbloodedchillers.com](mailto:info@coldbloodedchillers.com).