

Dark Horse Comics

Dark Horse Comics, the Northwest's largest comics and entertainment publisher, began when Milwaukie native Mike Richardson invested his profits from an already successful chain of comic bookstores into a new enterprise to take comic publishing to the next level. His idea, novel at the time, was that perhaps if illustrators owned their own work and had some creative control, the quality of comics might improve.

Little did he know his latest entrepreneurial venture would grow exponentially in the next two decades. Since locating in downtown Milwaukie (10956 SE Main St.) in 1989 – the very site where Richardson remembers buying his comics as a child – Dark Horse has expanded its headquarters to occupy 37,000 square feet. Close to 100 employees now work in multiple divisions: the core comics publishing business, a new book publishing division (M Press), a rapidly growing toy division, and sales and licensing.

Richardson's decision to locate in Milwaukie was based on a combination of "comfort zone" and business sense. "I had kept in touch with people over the years and liked the idea of coming home to join a business community with such integrity," he says. And a vacancy along Main Street was irresistible.

Although he couldn't foresee the company's rapid growth, "the city has been good to work with and expansions have gone smoothly," he says. He has also found Dark Horse's location to be a selling point when hiring employees, "who come from all over the nation." The Portland area's reputation for livability is a big draw, especially compared to New York City, home of the two largest comics publishers. So too are the "small city" advantages of Milwaukie, including affordable housing and no parking or commuting hassles.

Richardson now spends several days each month in Los Angeles tending to his movie producing

www.darkhorse.com



At a Glance: Dark Horse

Since July 1986, when Dark Horse Comics published its first anthology comic book, *Dark Horse Presents #1*, this unique publishing enterprise has grown to become the fourth largest comic-book publisher in the U.S. and the world's leading publisher of licensed comics material. Dark Horse is the publisher of some 500 titles, including such wildly popular comic series as *Star Wars*, *The Incredibles*, *Conan*, *Usagi Yojimbo*, *Concrete*, *Sin City*, *Hellboy* and a long list of "manga" hits.

Over the years, commitment to quality has earned the company enough Eisner (comics industry) awards to fill a warehouse, in nearly every "best of" category.

Today Dark Horse Comics has branched into book publishing and toy retailing and has two equally successful sister companies: Pop Culture retail stores and Dark Horse Entertainment. The latter, founded in 1992, has produced such Hollywood movies as *The Mask* (and its sibling, *Son of the Mask*), *TimeCop*, *Hellboy*, *Alien vs. Predator* and *Virus*, as well as several TV series.

