

With both of the Big 2 companies hyping summer crossovers focusing on reintegrating their history into ongoing efforts, there's a natural curiosity about the world to follow. With their post-"Convergence" solicitations already posted, DC definitely had more to talk about at C2E2, even if you might not know it from the schedule. As such, I made it my first priority to make it to the New DC Universe panel. I've already mentioned a couple of the more exciting announcements in my coverage of Day 2, but with so many books being launched and so little information available, I thought I'd give you guys a little more detail. After all, every book is somebody's favorite. The panel included the creative team on DC's massively successful Harley Quinn and the upcoming Starfire, Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti; Batman: Eternal architect and seeming master of DC's "Dark" universe, James Tynion IV; We Are Robin artist, Khary Randolph; Wonder Woman artist, David Finch; and Catwoman writer, Genevieve Valentine and was moderated by Heath Corson, the writer of a number of DC's animated features and the upcoming Bizarro. Conner opened the panel by talking about Harley Quinn, telling the crowd that issue #17 finds the mad psychologist more than a bit overworked. In order to balance her crazed schedule, Conner recruits a literal "gang of Harleys" from across the five boroughs to do her bidding. The extra muscle will come in handy when the Harleys take on the task of locating a missing sea captain, Horatio Strong. Strong, an old pre-Crisis character who is absolutely original and bears no resemblance to any spinach loving sailormen, gains superhuman strength when he ingests sauncho, an extraterrestrial seaweed with dangerous mental side-effects. Conner and Palmiotti also spoke about the Harley Quinn and Power Girl miniseries, spinning off from the main title. A six-issue mini, the series is set between two panels in Harley Quinn #12. "We kind of conned them into letting us do it," Palmiotti said, telling the panel that he and Conner had hoped but not intended to tell the full story when they penned the original gag. Asked why the pairing is so potent, Conner chalked it up to the basic rules of comedy. She pointed out that, even in PeeG's solo series, Power Girl has tended to be the grounded center of an insane universe, while Harley Quinn is a spot of madness in a more logical world. "They're really a perfect pair," Conner said, only to regret it when her husband failed to contain his giggling. Turning to Starfire, Conner called the series a fish out of water story and revealed that the series will take place in Key West, Florida. "I guess the joke," Palmiotti explained, "is that she's orange and everyone else is too." Throughout the presentation, Conner was quick to reiterate that she thinks that Starfire is "very smart" contrasting this quality with her lack of knowledge about the Earth. It seemed to me, a very conscious attempt to distance the book from the controversies of Red Hood and the Outlaws, and a welcome one indeed. Conner also frequently referred to her as Kory, or at least Kori, saying that she grew up with the Wolfman and Perez Starfire and that, while there wouldn't be an attempt to copy that style, it is very much in she and Palmiotti's minds when they determine if something is true to the character. Palmiotti also stated that we wouldn't be seeing Red Hood or Arsenal just yet, as he preferred to build up Starfire's own world first. That said, he promised a cameo in issue #3 that "no one will be expecting". As the man who just introduced Captain Strong to a packed convention center, I'm tempted to take his word. With that Corson moved over to James Tynion, asking him about taking over a Vertigo institution with John Constantine: The Hellblazer. Tynion was clear on what he wanted to bring to the title, saying that Constantine should feel like he walked out of our world and into comics. The original Hellblazer, to him, typified this kind of odd, supernatural realism and he felt that it was actually untrue to the character to not update him to keep pace with the world. Tynion's Constantine is the guy "at the end of the bar, and you don't know whether you want to have a conversation with him because you think it might destroy your

life...and you're right." Asked about the return of the name Hellblazer, Tynion was similarly certain...Khary Randolph opened by comparing *We Are Robin* to the *Sons of Batman* in *The Dark Knight Returns* adding that it might be more accurate to add in a dash of *V For Vendetta* and hip-hop influence. It's going to be a very gritty, street-level book and Randolph mentioned that he's trying to adjust his style to reflect that. The book will follow Duke Thomas from the "Zero Year" story as he finds himself caught up in the world of new Robin gang. In one of the most satisfying moments of the panel, Randolph said there would be "a lot of stuff with the police", calling the book topical and very political. David Finch spoke next about *Wonder Woman Annual #1*, which will apparently be a lengthy and brutal fight between Princess Diana and Donna Troy. Finch spoke excitedly of choreographing the battle. The fallout of this conflict will continue to be a big part of the *Wonder Woman* title, Finch said, and while he and his wife, Meredith, plan to reintroduce Donna into Diana's life, they're not going to make it easy. Donna has done some awful things, Finch told us, and there's going to be some real questions as to how you can come back from that. Asked about working with his wife, Finch answered that the pair have been fighting for years, so they might as well get paid to do it, even if he admitted that she tends to win. Glib as it was, he spoke very positively of their collaboration, saying that living with his writer has allowed them to do some really interesting things in the writing process and, particularly, with layouts. Finch also talked about designing *Wonder Woman's* new costume, saying that he wanted to give her something that felt a little more worthy of her stature and a little less out of place among her covered up peers in the Justice League. "The old one was a little stereotypical." The new costume is central to the cover of issue #42, but Finch warned us not to get distracted from issue #43's which introduces a character that we don't yet realize the importance of. Finch also hinted that the character is currently disguised, implying that without the mask we might recognize him. After that Palmiotti and Corson switched places to talk about *Bizarro*. "What makes you qualified to write *Bizarro*," Palmiotti asked. "Nothing," Corson answered. With a laugh, Corson admitted that he had cornered a DC editor sometime ago and when asked if he had any ideas for *Bizarro*, Corson could actually say yes. The pitch, was effectively *Jimmy Olson and Bizarro in Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*. The pair will take a mad road trip through *Bizarro-America* or, as we tend to call it, *Canada*. "Bizarro just wants to be loved," said Corson, explaining the craggy villain's appeal. Corson also shared a story from his childhood where he dressed up like *Superman*, creating the hero's iconic S-shield out of duct tape. With a *Superman* title under his belt, Corson asked his parents to send him the pictures, however in an *Shyamalanian* twist, he discovered that he had not counted on the reversal that would occur when he applied the tape in the mirror. He had been *Bizarro* all along...Inevitably he incorporated the experience into the first issue. Retaking his position as moderator, Corson asked Genevieve Valentine about *Catwoman*. Valentine described her Selina Kyle as someone who doesn't really like other people but likes getting things done. The two will come into conflict as she's forced to interact with people she thought she'd never have to deal with again in order to rebuild Gotham City's underworld. Valentine expressed her great excitement that one of those people would be Stephanie Brown. With that the panel opened to questions. As often is the case, a number of people in the audience got up to leave, prompting Jimmy Palmiotti to insist that they'd be sorry when they missed the big announcement at the end of the panel. He instructed us not to tell them about it afterwards. Asked how *Starfire* will compare to her portrayal in *Red Hood and the Outlaws*, or at least the famous first issue fiasco, Conner answered that she doesn't see *Starfire* as a particularly promiscuous character, but that the Kori in *Starfire* will have significantly fewer hang-ups about sex, notably about what is and is

not appropriate attire. Conner described it, overall, as a “different morality”. Khary Randolph admitted that *We Are Robin* will draw heavily from *The Warriors*, prompting Jimmy Palmiotti to remind us that “the Brooklyn gang won”. One fan asked about the status of Greta Hayes, Secret, but none of the panelists could claim to have any plans for the character, though they couldn’t speak to any other writers at DC. Another question was raised as to how old Starfire was being written. To my ears it seemed an attempt to discern how much the series would draw from the Teen Titans animated interpretation. Conner said that she imagines her being around 21, which is actually pretty accurate to most of the classic Wolfman stories. Asked about the effects of “Convergence” on their titles, Palmiotti explained that the ‘new DC universe’ titles, at least those of the assembled panelists, have been in production for some time and, as such, will not be affected by “Convergence”. Tynion and Valentine also described Batman group editor Mark Doyle’s vision of an “Elastic Gotham”. Rather than try to enforce unity from the top down, the goal is to create an atmosphere where the writers can tell their own stories in whatever genres they want and then stitch that together so that it feels like one city. Tynion said that the intention is to give the feeling of running into characters, highlighting natural interconnectedness over traditional crossovers. Tynion also seemingly implied that there would be even more new Gotham books in the future, though that’s only my speculation. Regardless, over the course of the weekend I got the sense that January’s Bat-Summit had not yet revealed all its secrets. Asked whether Bizarro would take readers to Bizarro World, Corson hopefully answered “maybe if we get past issue #6.” True to Palmiotti’s earlier warning, the panel welcomed a special guest just before the end as Brian Azzarello stepped onto the stage. Sitting calmly he asked us to all close our eyes and imagine three symbols, three characters...D. K. 3. With great enthusiasm Azzarello promised that he had been working with Frank Miller for months to bring us the next chapter in the Dark Knight saga. “I call him sensei,” Azzarello said with a smile. Details were scarce, but Azzarello’s focus seemed to be on the purity and faithfulness of this next installment and the panel ended with a humming excitement. The post C2E2 Report: The New DC Universe appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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