

David Steward II applies his father's tech savvy to comic book business

By Chris King Apr 11, 2013



Lion Forge Comics Managing Director David Steward II and his father David Steward Sr. (right) visited at Comic Con in St. Louis with actor Flex Alexander, Shanice, Thelma Steward and Mary Steward. Lion Forge is rolling out its first four series of direct-to-digital comics.

Photo by Wesley Law

Children of powerful parents often react to their parents' success by running away from it. That's not the case with David Steward II, son of David Steward, founder and chairman of World Wide Technology, Inc., a \$5 billion technology systems firm.

"I grew up in the household with my dad, who has been an entrepreneur since the mid-'80s, and I have followed third-hand his journey through it," David Steward II said. "He definitely gave me the drive to want go out there and create something new and innovative, which he's done with WWT."

The son's newest venture is modeled after his father's success by embracing technology. Steward is managing director of Lion Forge Comics, which brings savvy with new media and new ways of developing and distributing media to the age-old experience of thumbing through a comic book.

"With the iPad, Android and all the tablet devices, people are consuming and reading content in new ways, and I thought this would be a natural fit with comic books because they have a strong visual component," Steward said.

"Hey, this industry is changing, and the big boys, like Marvel and DC, are slow to change. For our company, there was ease of market entry. We didn't have to worry about printing costs for all of our products with the ability to get comics out on tablet devices."

Steward has been touring comics conventions to promote Lion Forge's first set of titles, which have names like *Bulletproof Knights*, *Catalyst Prime*, *ROBOY* and *The Joshua Run* and follow the adventures of private security contractors, superhumans, robots and a computer hacker for hire.

Steward has enlisted the talent of industry veterans such as Brandon M. Easton and Joelle Sellner and is experimenting with a celebrity tie-in. Actor Flex Alexander (*Snakes on a Plane*, *Poor Boy's Game*) helped to develop the story line for *The Joshua Run* and is making promotional appearances for Lion Forge, including one recently here at home at St. Louis Comic Con.

Though their initial publishing efforts are all direct to digital, Lion Forge will consider later packaging all of the episodes of any of its series as print-and-bound graphic novels.

"We will get a complete story over the season's run, then at the end of the year do an evaluation as to what is doing well, what people are responding to, then look at print options with a full graphic novel to satisfy comic book fans," Steward said.

Steward has tried his hand at previous business ventures in graphic design, brand merchandising and film production. But he got the idea of founding Lion Forge Comics during a stint when he was working for the company his father founded.

"I was having dinner with my dad, talking about life and direction," Steward said. "And he told me, 'Follow your passion. If you are doing something you love, you will never work another day in your life. That piqued my interest to start something on my own.'"

Steward, who is 35 and lives in St. Louis, also enjoys the support of his wife Mary Steward, who is helping to promote Lion Forge Comics.

"Next to my wife, my father is my No. 1 supporter," Steward said. "He has been helpful in a number of ways, making connections and providing business mentorship. This is far left field of his core industry, but he is excited I am working on something I am very passionate about."

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Contact Information

2315 Pine Street
St. Louis, MO 63103
Phone: (314) 533-8000
Email: webmaster@stlamerican.com