

ALL MEDIA RELEASE

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**“La Semaine de la Bande Dessinée”
A Week Celebrating the French Graphic Novel**

With guest artist **David B.** from Paris

If you loved the Oscar-nominated “Persepolis”, come meet the French artist who directly inspired both the beauty of its style and the intimacy of its storytelling, as the Alliance Française de Seattle, Fantagraphics Books and 4Culture of King County bring to Seattle the world-famous graphic novelist Pierre-François Beauchard, who publishes as “David B.”

From Wednesday August 13, 2008, through Sunday August 17, 2008, in a citywide set of venues, Seattle honors David B. with “La Semaine de la Bande Dessinée, A Week Celebrating the French Graphic Novel”. All major events are FREE and open to the public and offer something for everyone: students of French or European language and culture, artists and art-lovers, comics and graphic novel enthusiasts, cineastes, readers and book lovers.

These varied events pay homage not just to the art of the French cartoon but also to more than 300 regional cartoonists who live within 150 miles of Seattle. For this, we could host no better celebrity than Mr. Beauchard, who is doubly renowned. In 1990, while still a student, he co-founded L’Association, an artist-run publishing house that revolutionized the style, subject matter, and success of European comics. As an artist, he created this new wave’s breakthrough epic, “Epileptic” (the English translation of his French best-seller “L’Ascension du Haut Mal”).

Published by L’Association in France and by Pantheon Books in the US (in a translation by Seattle-based Kim Thompson of Fantagraphics), this extraordinary, visually audacious autobiography inspired artists across the world to take up the graphic novel form – notably Marjane Satrapi, who created

“Persepolis” with David B. first as her mentor and champion and, then, as her first publisher.

In addition to an exhibition of his art (“My Story, My Stories”) specially prepared for Seattle’s Fantagraphics Gallery, Mr. Beauchard will present and discuss his work at Seattle Central Library and, for the Henry Art Gallery, he will lead an “master artist” panel discussion about the use of image, space, language and culture. This panel will feature two Seattle-based artists whose work is frequently honored in Europe: Mr. Jim Woodring and Mr. Peter Bagge¹.

This week of events aims to further understanding of that special union of art and literature that is the graphic novel. As “la bande dessinée” (literally, “designed strip”), this singular medium has enjoyed special cultural status in France since the nineteenth century. There, it is known as “the ninth art” and one out of every eight books sold is a bande dessinée or “B.D” (pronounced *BAY-DAY*).

This is a celebration specifically suited to our region. Not only do more than six thousand French nationals reside in the Puget Sound area, along with an almost equal number of other francophones: Reading itself is also especially popular here (the appetite for it is so great that, as the *New York Times* recently conceded, “New York may publish the books, but Seattle significantly defines America’s reading list”). Most important of all, Seattle is home to Fantagraphics Books, North America’s premier publisher and promoter of independent comics, graphic novels, comic anthologies and magazines².

Fantagraphics, (who have published and translated David B.) have nursed their popular Georgetown gallery and bookstore into one of Seattle’s most intriguing

¹ In 2006, Mr. Woodring was named a United States Artist Fellow and was honoured with a museum show at last year’s prestigious International Festival of the Bande Dessinée – held annually in Angoulême, France; Mr. Bagge’s work was recently honoured in Barcelona, Spain, where he was chased down the street by Spanish fans.

² A 2003 survey of the most influential American publishers in the history of comics, undertaken by Krause Publications to mark the 25th anniversary of its weekly trade publication *The Comics Buyers’ Guide*, listed Fantagraphics Books as the fifth most important, behind Marvel, D.C., Gold Key and the (now defunct) Kitchen Sink Press

tourist destinations. In partnership with them and 4Culture of King County, the Alliance Française de Seattle thanks the Seattle Central Library, the Henry Art Gallery, Artist Trust of Washington state, Pantheon Books/ Random House New York, the Federation of Alliances Française USA, the French American Chamber of Commerce of the Pacific Northwest, the Northwest Film Forum, Esquin Wines and the Ace Hotel for helping us originate this unique introduction to an international medium.

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The art of David B. assembled by our team goes on to appear at the Louisiana State University Museum of Art (LSUMOA) in Baton Rouge in November and will be presented as part of the “New Literature from Europe Festival”, from November 18 to 21 at the French Embassy Cultural Services, 972 Fifth Avenue, New York, by the French Book Office, the Goethe Institut, l'Instituto Cervantes, the Czech Center and the Istituto Italiano Di Cultura.

The Alliance Française de Seattle is proud to have initiated this event, which emphasizes the international ties of Seattle, our citizens and our own artists.

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ONLINE PRESS ROOM www.afseattle.org/bdpress.html

- Press for guest artist Pierre–François Beauchard (David B.)

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- For separate events, see EVENTS LISTINGS press contacts