

Meet *Speed Bump* creator Dave Coverly

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the *Keizertimes*

A teacher informed Dave Coverly's parents that he was going to be a cartoonist one day, he was in fifth grade at the time.

"What every kid who wants to chase a dream needs more than anything is encouragement and support, not just from parents - mine were amazing - but from teachers. I was lucky enough to have them, from Mrs. Lam in fifth grade to Mr. Zelnis in high school, who taught journalism and brought me copies of *The New Yorker* to study."

Coverly is the creator of *Speed Bump*, a daily cartoon that will be featured in the *Keizertimes* beginning this week. *Speed Bump* is a daily, single-panel comic (think *Far Side*), but *Keizertimes* will publish one per week.

Coverly said he got his start tracing, and then copying, the work he discovered in *Peanuts*, *BC*, *Hagar the Horrible*, *Wizard of Id*, and what he now calls the "loose, clever and organic" style of Frank & Ernest.

"I wanted to draw - and, more importantly, write - like those cartoonists," Coverly said.

As he was about to buckle in to a different career, as solely a writer, comic

strips that re-inspired his first love began arriving in his life.

"They weren't just silly, they were about something," he said. "They were so observational and smart, and because I wasn't old enough to understand their context I couldn't emulate them, but they made me realize how much I loved conceptualizing ideas. I also fell in love with the absurd humor of *Herman* by Jim Unger around that time, and so those two influences pretty much became the stock of my creative soup."

He prefers the single-panel style to the multi-panel creations he drew his first inspiration from.

"I love people who can do (multi-panel work) but I like being surprised at what comes out of my pencil, and I like figuring out what sort of character would best tell the joke," Coverly said.

When he's wanted to tackle longer forms, he's either illustrated or written and illustrated children's books. Subscribers to BarkBox might also recognize his style from their monthly shipments. The latter was a dream opportunity for the dog lover. The children's books become passion projects over time.

"They're very difficult from a practical

standpoint, given syndicated cartooning comes with strict weekly deadlines, but there's beauty in getting lost in the process and feeling the momentum of those ideas laying a foundation to build more ideas upon," Coverly said.

When it comes to *Speed Bump*, his goal is to encourage younger readers to discover new depths of humor while providing LOLs for adults on a regular basis.

"*Garfield* is a great example. It can be enjoyed by all age groups. I don't have to tell you how tricky it is, though, with all the tech options competing for attention. In *Speed Bump*, specifically,

I'm not aiming at a particular age group, and someone who doesn't like Monday's cartoon might like Tuesday's, or vice versa," Coverly said.

His advice to those who want to follow in his footsteps is to draw cartoons for the sake of drawing cartoons and not with a specific goal in mind.

"Don't be afraid to have influences, but also don't be afraid to set those aside and find out what kind of artist you are. What you have to say is more important than how you say it, so give yourself room and time to just think. Daydreaming isn't being lazy, it's crucial to the art," Coverly said.

Speed Bump By DAVE COVERLY



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