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Interview with MAYDAY's Alex de Campi and Tony Parker

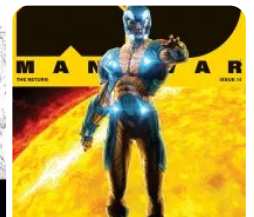
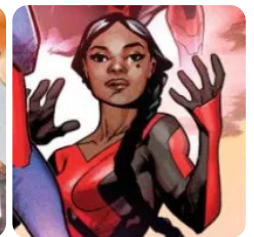
BY FABIENNE PAYET · PUBLISHED APRIL 21, 2017 · UPDATED APRIL 21, 2017

Outright Geekery's Fabienne Payet recently had a great opportunity to interview Alex de Campi and Tony Parker the wonderful people behind MAYDAY. A very interesting series set in the Soviet Era. If you like espionage, spies, and mayhem, give MAYDAY a try, you will not regret it.

Outright Geekery: Where does the interest come from to write about a somewhat unusual topic?

Alex de Campi: I've always been fascinated by the Cold War. I am old enough to remember the Reagan Years, which were mostly a lot of scare tactics and fear mongering about the Soviets: films like The Day After

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Tomorrow and Red Dawn. Of course, if you tell a child that something is bad or evil, the child becomes fascinated with it... this happened on both sides. And also, spy stories seemed... stuck. It was all fancy gadgets and men and women in suits, which is not at all what the rather grubby, embarrassing history of Cold War espionage was. So I wanted to do a spy book that didn't feel dead and tired. James Bond is dead. I love Bond, long live Bond, but he is dead. I also wanted to do a spy book that made us really think about what the spies are doing. I mean, special tasks / active ops is terrorism. So I took a half-step to the left. Moved the axis of operations to California, a sunny place for shady people. Made the heroes young Soviets, lost in this bright modern country. Made you feel how far they were from home. The story is also a homage to some of my favourite early 1970s filmmakers: Peckinpah. Antonioni. Malick. Why, in any case, write about usual topics? How dull to do that.

OG: Given that this is such an extensive period in history, how long did it take you to research it all?

***A.D:** I researched on and off for a year before writing. I must have read a dozen Cold War defector and CIA case officer autobiographies. They're fascinating. I'm still reading them. I love history. Nothing we imagine will ever be stranger than what has already happened. And it's all there, in books, if only we would take them and read them.*

***Tony Parker:** First off, Alex was wonderful with sending key notes and suggestions for different specific items. I was researching the entire time, and constantly adding to the reference folders. I focused as much as I could on news articles and image sites like Getty Images, and avoided media representations of the era when possible. Media idealizes reality, where I wanted that sense that you were in the era. When looking for devices and vehicles, I tried to remember that everything wasn't new, so all the vehicles were at least a year old, if not 10. Clothing wasn't all idealized stylish, but worn. The pop culture references in the book were for the characters who would have directly worn them out of idealizing which star initially wore them, not because I just like the movie.*

OG: How important was the accurate representation of that time frame and the events?



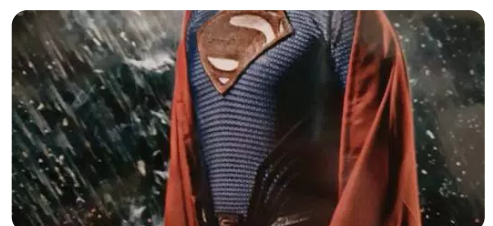
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A.D: *We did our best. It was important to me, and Tony is extremely responsible in terms of putting in the work to do a historic period justice. But of course I'd rather he spend his time drawing than googling, so for a lot of the key locations I sent him photo ref that he could use if he wished. It wasn't everything, but it would hopefully cut down his time, or at least inspire him. The May Day riots, there was a ton of quite horrifying photographs of hippies being beaten up by horse cops. We were very specific about how much of the Transamerica Tower was built then. The gas station shootout in Issue 2, the Case Study house in Issue 1.... even the address of the CIA safe house in San Francisco was accurate. Everything was deliberate. But also, we didn't want to be pedantic. Would a couple of Soviet spies have really driven a Mustang? No.*

T.P: *I tried to make it as visually accurate as I could find reference.*

OG: **I love the playlist rundown at the back of the comics. It really adds to the story. How interlinked is music to your writing and creative process? Can we have the link to the playlist?**

A.D: *I'd always intended to write these stories (and I intend more of them) to specific soundtracks from the era, with a lot of music diegetic to the scene. We misjudge the early 1970s. That is still hippie time in most peoples' minds, when in fact by April 1971 the Stooges had two albums out, so did Black Sabbath, the top music was treacle-pop by the Osmonds and Tony Orlando & Dawn, and Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets were creating protest poems that still feel incredibly apt to this day. So every scene has a soundtrack, and that soundtrack is noted in the panel borders if the music isn't actually within the scene (on a car radio, etc). It's a very broad list, from modern classical (I really like Steve Reich) to aforementioned treacle-pop and so much superb early metal, to early prog.... In the single issues, I write about the songs in each scene, and also there are extra story panels. So if you're interested in learning more about the music and why it's there, and about some of the Soviet stuff briefly noted in the story (Arkady Gaidar, etc) you may want to pick up the individual issues via your LCS or via Comixology, as none of that is in the trade.*

The playlist link is here: [Mayday, a Playlist by Alex de Campi on Spotify](#)



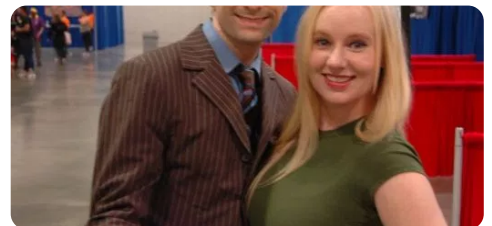
CosPlay Profile – Matches Malone



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OG Goes to Wizard World Nashville



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T.P: I'm a big fan of using music as a soundtrack for whatever piece I'm working on. I'm not near as cool with music as Alex, so I stuck with a bunch of Rolling Stones, Parliament-Funkadelic, Three Dog Night, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. Not as a playlist, but repeating the same song for hours on end. Thankfully, I have a solo studio, so no one else is subjugated to that repetition. 😊

OG: Which KGB and espionage stories/movies inspired you?

A.D: My two favourite Cold War films are Ken Russell's *The Billion-Dollar Brain* (I'm a bit of a stan for the entire Harry Palmer series tbh) and Florian Henkel von Donnersmarck's masterful *The Lives of Others*. But my biggest inspirations, film-wise, for the books were Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*, Hopper's *Easy Rider*, and Malick's *Badlands*. In terms of books, you know, *Le Carre* really is great. But I was much more interested in things like Milt Bearden's *The Main Enemy*, or Ion Pacepa's *Red Horizons*... Arkady Shevchenko's autobiography is fantastic, too. Oh, and Misha Wolf's.

T.P: I tried to keep it as honest to itself as I could. I love the movies of the time, but felt that if I put in any homages that it would detract from the original story.

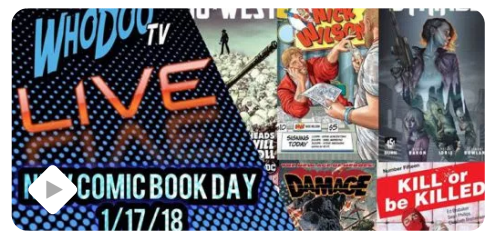
OG: There is usage of Russian in the comics and there is some explanation in the notes as well (which is much appreciated of course!). Does any of you speak Russian?

A.D: No, but I want to learn. I picked up some bits and pieces from the autobiographies I read, and also from checking things with Russian friends. The Russian language's change during and after the Soviet years is fascinating. There are whole vocabularies that fell out of use once communism ended. These dusty, horrible pearls...

T.P: Only enough to get in to trouble or start a fight.

OG: The art is particularly exquisite, how long does it take to conceptualize, draw and color the art?

T.P: The pages took one to two days per page, and then Blond did an AMAZING job on the colors. The only real delay in the book was because of a lot of personal issues that I had to deal with. Thankfully, Alex, Blond, and



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ComicCast Issue #74 "Avengers: No Surrender... Marvel's SECRET Event"



WhoDooTV Reviews Valiant Entertainment's Eternity #3

Brendan Wright (the editor) were all incredibly understanding.

A.D: Delay? What delay? We shipped monthly LIKE CLOCKWORK. Tony's a superb artist to deal with. Young artists don't realize that being successful in the business requires so much more than talent. Like, being incredibly talented is BASELINE. Tony plays well with others, accepts notes but will stand firm and fight his corner on things he thinks are right (this is great!) and checks in every Monday with an update on how things are going. If he can't make his (usually self-imposed) page goals for the week, he lets us know in advance.

OG: Do you think you will revisit the era in other series?

A.D: Well, we're going to revisit this era in more miniseries with these characters, once I have a moment to sit down and write them. Next up: Berlin, 1972. The Baader-Meinhof Group.

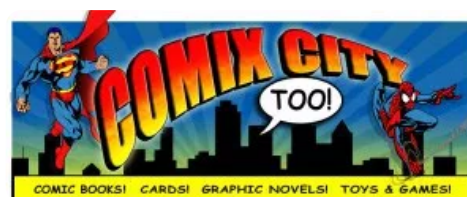
What are your next projects?

T.P: Nothing I can talk about now. NEVER get ahead of an editor on announcing projects. 😊

A.D: Bankshot, a five-issue explodo / action mini with Chris Cross and Snakebite, out from Dark Horse in... June, I think. And about three OGNs that haven't been announced yet. Oh! And my Lion Forge / Catalyst Prime series with Pop Mhan and Jessica Kholinne, Astonisher. Mayday is an early-1970s auteur film; Astonisher and Bankshot are Don Simpson-produced 1980s action flicks. I've also got some Judge Dredd stories coming up in 2000AD, which is super cool. The first one is very JG Ballard meets Raymond Chandler; the second is all John Carpenter.

OG: How can people get in touch with you on social media? Will you be attending any conventions soon?

T.P: I try to keep my social media simple. Facebook-[tonyparkerart](#) Twitter [@tonyparkerart](#) Instagram [tonyparkerart1](#) Tumblr (which is horribly neglected) [tonyparkerart](#) Website [Tony Parker Art | I Draw Stuff](#) I'll be at the Silicon Valley Comic Con with original art from the book, as well as the Phoenix Comic Con. Please come on by and say hi!



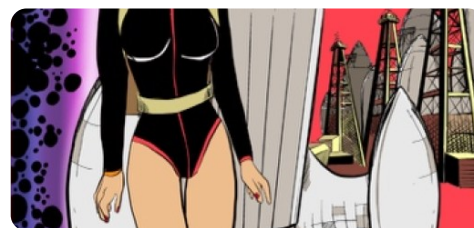
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A.D: I'm most places on social media as @alexdecampi. That's the best way to get in touch with me. I'm not doing a lot of conventions this year, as I'm trying to write a novel. But a few big conventions have reached out about guest appearances, so if you follow me on twitter or tumblr or Insta, I'll keep you posted on where I am.

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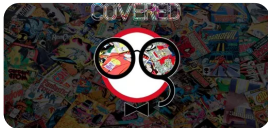
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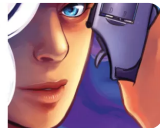
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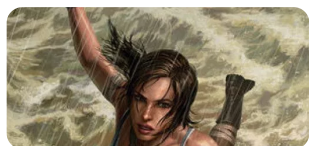
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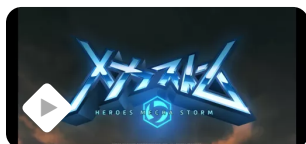


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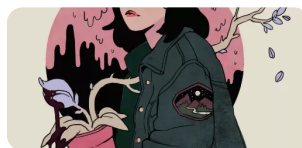
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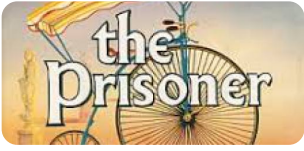


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