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By Catherine Bigelow, Chronicle Staff Writer

Chronicle's tech serial drawing a lot of clicks



Painter Mark Stock (left), author Heather Stallings, gallerist Martin Muller and Scott LeFevre.

Photo: Catherine Bigelow, Special To The Chronicle

Will Roger Martin manage to crack the customs of a code-crowded San Francisco? Will PR pro Andy actually land the legendary gamer as a client? And when will Roger discover that Beth is really his online inamorata, Forever Steffi?

These, and other burning Qs, swirled like HTML characters on a screen when fans gathered last week at Modernism West-Foreign Cinema, where gallerist **Martin Muller** hosted a party to celebrate author **Heather Stallings** and The Chronicle's launch of the new serial "Click City." And just to be clear, the lead character of

Roger is not based on a real-time, hoodie-wearing tech titan whose last name begins with a Z.

"All the characters and locales are composites," Stallings explained. "Although I often have a prototype in mind."

Serial installations are a time-honored tradition in the news biz. And The Chronicle is renowned for its run of "Tales of the City," which enthralled readers when it debuted in 1976 and propelled the publishing career of its author, former Chronicle reporter **Armistead Maupin**.

Among "Click" fans: French Consulate cultural attaché **Stéphane Ré**; painter **Mark Stock**; Litquake co-founder **Jane Ganahl**; **Scott LeFevre**; and a cadre of Chroniclers including Features Deputy Managing Editor **Meredith White**; Executive Features Editor/TV Critic **David Wiegand**; columnist **Leah Garchik**; reporters **Meredith May** and **Julian Guthrie**; Deputy Managing Editor **Frank Mina**; Art Director **Elizabeth Burr**; Chronicle Magazine Editor **David Lewis**; and illustrator **Shannon May**, whose whimsical drawings accompany "Click City."

A native of Spokane, Wash., Stallings is a CPA by trade and an author by passion. Her first published piece, "One of the Boys," was based on her experience at a sports management firm where she honed her eye for observation.

"Writing this is almost like reporting," Stallings said. "Because even though 'Click City' is, technically, fictional, the audience wants the details to be authentic."

Stallings is also an ACT board member and active in social circles from S.F. to Silicon Valley, where her husband, **John Little**, founded Portal Software all the way back in the digitally dark age of 1985.

"What's so accessible about 'Click' is it's sort of 'Tech for the rest of us,' " admitted editor Lewis, with a laugh. "Because I wouldn't know a bit from a byte."

"But the main thing is, Heather's writing about relationships and the basic human desire to connect," he continued. "The city is in the midst of a new kind of Gold Rush. But since its beginnings, San Francisco has always been a city of newcomers."

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