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## BOOKS

### THIS 'DOG MAN' HAS ITS DAY

Dav Pilkey's graphic-novel series prepares for its biggest rollout yet

BY ELLEN GAMERMAN

**HAD THE AUTHOR** Dav Pilkey not loved his pet poodle Bozo so much, he might never have sketched his first "Dog Man." His second-grade drawings of a canine superhero led to a global publishing franchise.

"Dog Man: Brawl of the Wild," on sale Monday, is the sixth book in Mr. Pilkey's graphic-novel series. Its initial print run of five million copies is the biggest rollout yet for the series launched two years ago. (By comparison, the 2007 first printing of the last "Harry Potter" book tallied 12 million copies.)

Like Mr. Pilkey's best-selling "Captain Underpants" books, "Dog

Man" is aimed at elementary-school readers. The hero is born when a dog's head is stitched to a cop's body.

For now at least, "Dog Man" saves Mr. Pilkey from drawing the grade-school stars of the "Captain Underpants" series, troublemakers George and Harold, as they enter adolescence. Mr. Pilkey said he isn't sure if he will add to the 12-book series, which has been adapted for a 2017 feature film and a new Netflix show.

The 52-year-old author, who has no children, spoke to thousands of young fans on a sold-out tour this fall. At events, he highlights his own childhood struggles with dyslexia and ADHD.

Such challenges weren't well understood at his Lutheran school

in Elyria, Ohio, he said, explaining his academic career as a class clown and hyper misfit. While Mr. Pilkey's parents praised his talent and commissioned his comics, his teachers banished him to a desk in the hallway. It was there that he began to draw "Dog Man."

Mr. Pilkey, who often took a full day to write and draw each of the 224 pages in the new book, usually works in pencil on card stock with acrylic, watercolor and gouache. Not long ago he gave his cat villain Petey a kitten to serve as his conscience.

In the latest novel, Petey searches his soul in jail. "I'm a bad cat," he texts his kitten. "I can't even B good 4 seventeen minutes on my own."

The writer splits time between



Dav Pilkey during his 'Howl With Laughter' tour. His new graphic novel, 'Dog Man: Brawl of the Wild,' comes out on Monday.

Bainbridge Island, Wash., and Japan, where his wife of 13 years has family. He often works on "Dog Man" while at that home in the Shizuoka prefecture in eastern Japan, where he said he is inspired by art, advertising and details as small as

the design on a potato-chip bag. Spending time outdoors in Japan also fuels his creativity. "There are monkeys who live down by the beach near our home," he said. "Hanging out with monkeys, it's a great place to get ideas."