

Learn how to get your comics published

WANT to publish a comic book, but don't know how? You might be able to pick some tips from Comics Publishing Forum 2007 - Inside The Panel, Outside The Box, to be held at Singapore Management University on 23 Jun, 9.30am to 4pm.

Hosted by the Media Development Authority, it

will feature speakers from Tokyopop, the largest manga publisher in the US; Diamond Book Distributor, the world's largest English-language comic book distributor, as well as artists from the local comics industry.

They will touch on what makes a good but marketable graphic novel.

There will also be a workshop on the techniques of sequential art storytelling by Max Wong from Taiwan.

Tickets at \$10 a person are on sale at the Substation, SAM kiosks and SingPost post offices.

For more details, log on to www.gatecrash.com.sg or call 6222 5595.

◆ Mr Wee with figurines of comic characters he created.

Picture
ADELINE ONG

Singapore Media Fusion
singaporemediafusion.com

Do you have a passion for drawing, a talent for storytelling, have a great idea you want to see published, or simply want to know the latest trends and opportunities in the comics industry?

If Yes, Then THE COMICS PUBLISHING FORUM 2007 Is Just The Event For You!

Hosted by the Media Development Authority of Singapore, this flagship event of the First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative will bring you both commercial and artistic insights from the experts.

Date: 23 June 2007, Saturday
Time: 9.30 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. (Registration starts at 8.30 a.m.)
Venue: Conference Hall 1, Singapore Management University, Administrative Building, 81 Victoria Street, Singapore 188065
Who should go: Comic book creators, Artists, Writers, Publishers, Aged 16 and above.
Tickets: \$10

Stand a chance to win a set of Frank Miller's Sin City Library.
For more information and registration, please visit www.gatecrash.com.sg

Tickets are available at:
• The Substation
• Hotline 6222-5595

• S.A.M. Kiosks
• www.gatecrash.com.sg

• SingPost Post Offices

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It's more than just drawing pretty pictures

Comics need a good plot and character development, says local comic artist

By Chong Zheng Ying
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YOU got an A in art. That means you are perfect for the job of a comics artist, right? Wrong.

Singaporean comic artist Wee Tian Beng will tell you you need more than just a flair for drawing and colouring. And he should know.

The 41-year-old is the creator of comic series The Celestial Zone and Celestial 21, and is also the first Singaporean to break into the Hong Kong and Taiwanese markets with his series Astronotics in 1993.

He said: "Being a comic artist is not about drawing a beautiful picture. That probably makes up only 30 per cent of the skill."

The other 70 per cent involves thinking about character development, a storyline, and being able to play the part of a "director", to frame a scene, for example.

He added: "It's not possible to create a character without first listing their good and bad characteristics, likes and dislikes."

"It's not just about drawing a pretty girl. There are more techniques and skills involved to give a character life."

You also have to think about publishing and marketing your work, he said.

Mr Wee, whose comics have been translated in Spanish and French, will be one of several speakers at the Comics Publishing Forum 2007 this Saturday, 23 Jun. (See report on facing page above.)

He will be speaking on what it takes to become a comic artist and how to self-publish comics in Singapore.

The job is not easy and requires intensive skilled labour.

That's why in countries like Hong Kong, it takes up to 15 people to produce a 60-page coloured comic each month, Mr Wee said.

Here in the six-year-old TCZ Studio in Singapore - a publishing house set up by him - Mr Wee said his production team is much smaller: three full-time staff members and him producing the 64-page coloured comic Celestial 21 every month.

For this wuxia (martial arts) comic

set in Singapore, Mr Wee develops the characters and stories, and is the main illustrator. His co-workers help with the colouring and compilation.

As one of Singapore's pioneer comic artists, who illustrated series such as The Adventures Of Wisely and Return Of The Condor Heroes, Mr Wee said the industry here is still small.

"In places like Japan, Hong Kong and even America where the market is bigger, they can afford to hire more people to help in production."

The soft-spoken artist said that Singapore's small comic readership means comic artists have fewer resources to hire people to help in the production work.

Mr Wee, who is self-taught, said: "Being a comic artist in Singapore, you have to do everything from illustration to product placement to marketing to the actual sales of the book."

"We are constantly thinking of new ways to sell our merchandise."

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

The creative entrepreneur has now ventured into the world of mobile technology.

Celestial 21 is available on handphones in Shenzhen, China.

Plans to bring the series to mobile users in Singapore are in the works.

Mr Wee, who is the chairman of the newly-formed Comics Society (Singapore), started drawing part-time about 17 years ago. He was also working as an art director in advertising agencies then.

He added that he has plans to "publish and support" the works of four new local comic artists next year. "Most Singaporean comic artists are talented, but they need a deeper knowledge of the skills and techniques involved in creating a compelling storyline," he said.

"I'm hoping to help guide them to understand this better."