



IndieCreator: Insights from a Newbie Comic Creator & Other Industry Pros

This is a series of bi-weekly columns by Bob Heske @ Heske Horror, creator of [The Night Projectionist](#) and [Cold Blooded Chillers](#), featuring interviews and insights from indie comic artists, writers, creators, distributors and visionaries.

10 Questions with Sy Whitehall @ myebook

If you don't know who Sy Whitehall is now – no worries. You'll soon become familiar with his myebook.com self-publishing site which has gained a huge following and great praise in its 18-month infancy. Head of Communications at myebook, Sy Whitehall has been busy spreading the good word about myebook which has become *the* place for creators big and small to post and publish a mind-bending array of e-creations varying from teasers and previews to complete diaries, photo albums, graphic novels and books. Myebook boasts a publishing platform that's as smooth as a BMW stick shift and has as many multi-media apps as a Smart Phone. Google Sy and you'll see on various social networking sites that his main interest is "Making it possible for everyone to have the ability to create and share content online."



Mission accomplished, Sy. Brilliant!

1. As a Beta platform user, I can attest to how damn smooth and powerful your myebook application is. I can also personally vouch for your customer service as you helped me size and load my logo in a pinch. Time to let the rest of the world know – what is myebook and what's your vision for this multi-media e-publishing platform?

(SW) Quite a question to start on. Myebook is an online publishing platform that is free to use. We have spent over 2 ½ years developing what you can now see. Myebook is unlike anything else available in that you can create a turning page ebook with added multi-media content without having to understand the science behind it. Once you have created an ebook, you can then get it in front of your audience in a number of ways.

When we set about designing myebook, we wanted to make it possible for anyone to be able to make stunning examples of their work. In only a short time we were seeing people create ebooks for their comics, magazines, music promotion, school work, diaries, travel journals, the promotion of films and computer games, and a host of other uses. Because

myebook sits alongside, and integrates beautifully with, all the other social web platforms it is a very clever way of bringing all of your content together to then redistribute.

2. Let's talk volume – how many publishers / books in your library? And what is your monthly traffic? How much of this is comics and graphic novels?

(SW) The figures are rising by the second. We have had tens of thousands of people register an account in the last few months, over two thousand books that are for public viewing, and over 10,000 books that are either in production or set as private (i.e., not for public viewing). It is difficult to say. Go to the comics section in the library and you will see for yourself exactly what is going on.



3. Speaking of that, I've noticed a big jump in the number of hits to my Cold Blooded Chillers comics. What have you been doing to publicize the site? Or has the news spread from testimonials and word of mouth?

(SW) We are getting close to where we want to be in terms of a good spread of coverage. Myebook is doing exactly what we wanted it to do. You will find us mentioned, blogged, Diggged, mailed, posted, tweeted, and embedded into pretty well every kind of website in nearly every country around the world. Because you can apply myebook to anything, and anything to myebook, we are seeing a real diversity of users and content. As a result we are growing exponentially.

4. Self-service seems to be a big part of your website. How have you made this application easy for users – from the technically proficient to the technically challenged?

(SW) The brief we gave ourselves was to create a system that allows anyone to publish content on the web for free, without having to understand the technology behind it.

We wanted users to be able to include all forms of internet media. This was a challenge in itself in allowing anyone to be able to add video, audio and animation. We achieved this by creating the building and viewing process in "Flash." Users can now drag and drop their content onto their ebook without having to create strings of code to achieve it. The asset (i.e., an "asset" being a picture, video, or text file) you have selected will alter the management panel to show you all the tooling available for that asset. You can then alter, set, and adjust the asset and, if you have your work as a PDF, all you have to do is upload it and our system converts it into an ebook. You can then open it in the builder software to add other media. It is the simplest system I have ever seen for getting content on-line. If you can click a mouse on a screen, you can create an ebook.

5. Tell us about the Partners program – how it works and what new bells and whistles you plan to add in the near future.

(SW) The Partner account is here for people placing commercial content within myebook. Anyone with a product or service to sell should apply to change their account to a Partner account. Again, it is completely free and you will be able to access functions and features not available to the General User account. As the new platforms are rolled-out, it will be the Partners who will have access to them – see the next answer below.

6. Now that the Beta is firmly in place – and getting great reviews from Indie comic creators – what's the plan for your 2.0 and 3.0 versions? When will these platforms roll out?

(SW) The next platform which is nearing the end of its development is our e-commerce system. This is of great interest to you guys in the comics industry. It will enable you to offer a preview of your work, then either sell the remainder of the ebook to read on-line, or the option to purchase a physical copy.

The e-commerce system will give you full stock management, customer management and distribution management all built in. In only a few days you will have the ability to manage your business from design concept to sales and distribution of the finished work (and no distributor grabbing their wedge of all your hard work!).



7. The Beta platform is basically a community where members can peruse comics for free – essentially the books on the site are freeware. Have you had any issues with people complaining that somebody stole their work? How do you safeguard against piracy complaints?

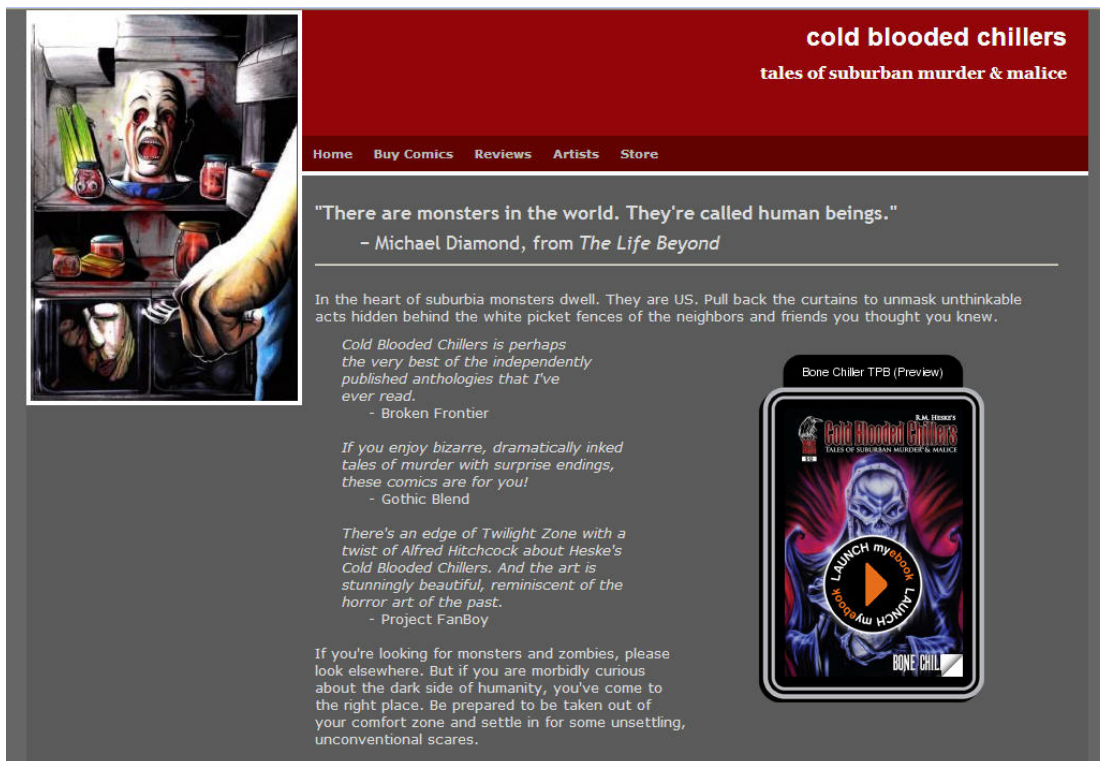
(SW) The entire system is self-policing. If we receive notification from anyone about copyright infringement, we will investigate it. It has not happened yet. We state in the

Terms & Conditions, and during the process of uploading PDFs, that you must be the owner of any copyrighted material to be able to upload it.

8. *REVENUE. Getting your work out there is great. But how can creators and publishers make \$\$\$\$\$ via advertising or driving members to their websites or stores for sales?*

(SW) You have a platform to assist in the promotion and marketing of your products and services. Myebook is unique in its ability to promote and sell to your audience with its array of features. Imagine an introductory video of the creators/writers of a comic introducing themselves and their work inside the ebook and audio files on each page highlighting/narrating the story/product. After you have hooked readers with a free preview of the content, now comes the sale. You can either link out of your ebook to your distributor shop or e-commerce system or you will soon be able to do this from the myebook e-commerce system (currently in development).

Myebook integrates beautifully with your retail website. Embed your ebooks on your site and let your audience launch them to see samples of your work. Add them to your MySpace profile, add our application in FaceBook and mail your ebooks out to the entire FaceBook community. Mail-shot your user/data base of customers to deliver a preview of your work. Getting your work in front of your audience has never been easier!



cold blooded chillers
tales of suburban murder & malice

Home Buy Comics Reviews Artists Store

"There are monsters in the world. They're called human beings."
- Michael Diamond, from *The Life Beyond*

In the heart of suburbia monsters dwell. They are US. Pull back the curtains to unmask unthinkable acts hidden behind the white picket fences of the neighbors and friends you thought you knew.

Cold Blooded Chillers is perhaps the very best of the independently published anthologies that I've ever read.
- Broken Frontier

If you enjoy bizarre, dramatically inked tales of murder with surprise endings, these comics are for you!
- Gothic Blend

There's an edge of Twilight Zone with a twist of Alfred Hitchcock about Heske's Cold Blooded Chillers. And the art is stunningly beautiful, reminiscent of the horror art of the past.
- Project FanBoy

If you're looking for monsters and zombies, please look elsewhere. But if you are morbidly curious about the dark side of humanity, you've come to the right place. Be prepared to be taken out of your comfort zone and settle in for some unsettling, unconventional scares.

Bone Chiller TPB (Preview)

LAUNCH myebook LAUNCH myebook

BONE CHILL

Editor's Note: With myebook, you can copy HTML and embed it onto your website. I've posted previews of 3 floppies and a trade paperback on myebook and have received collectively nearly 60,000 hits in 6 months. To see how simple and effective this works, visit my homepage at www.coldbloodedchillers.com (shown above).

9. What are some of the biggest names we can see on your site. Who are your biggest competitors? Where do you see myebook positioned in 5 years?

(SW) Since our launch we have had several thousand companies register accounts. I can only comment on those who have published public content so far: WarnerMusic, Universal Music, Warner films, BlackHole recordings, EddieHalliwell, Markosia, CapCom, and Anderson Press to name but a few.

When we set out to develop myebook, we wanted to position ourselves right in the middle of everything else that was going on. We did not want to appear as competition to anyone else, but to act as a platform to bring together and publish all the elements of other systems. You could say YouTube are competition because they host video; iTunes is competition because they host music; as are websites because they deliver online content; and publishing houses because they publish books. However, because we incorporate all of these things, and because what we are doing is so unique, competition could be everything and everyone or nothing and nobody.

Where will myebook be in 5 years?

Given that what we have at present is the base platform for several more stages of development, and each platform is as well designed and conceived as myebook itself, and knowing what comes next, there is no reason why we should not be used and known by a lot of people. What we have created is unique, fresh and free. Time will tell.

10. Let's close on comics. Did you read comics growing up? If so, what were your favorites as a young hoodlum in the UK and as a savvy entrepreneur today?

(SW) Until recently, since the comics industry got involved with myebook, the last time I read a comic was decades ago. It was probably a Beano or Dandy as a kid and the odd copy of Viz as a teen. I started reading music magazines and papers from quite a young age, so I missed getting involved with the whole comics thing as a young adult/adult. Now that I am surrounded by the industry and reading comics on myebook on a daily basis, I have new-found interest. I am really enjoying people offering their first-ever comic creation as an ebook to the likes of Markosia and some of their superb titles.

I am really looking forward to seeing the comics industry using myebook to good effect and making the most of the system. If comics had been available in such a media-rich format when I was a boy, I would have been hooked. I feel the next generation of comic readers will be a larger audience with a broader age range because myebook displays comic content at its absolute best, appealing to the masses. I am excited to see the first "next generation" multi-media comic book which will integrate illustration, video and audio in one interactive digital file.

Bonus Question: *If you were to stash away three myebooks on a computer chip inside a time capsule, what would they be?*

(SW) That's a hard question. There is so much good work on the system. If I had to make a choice, one of my favorites is "A Cinderela." It is a collection of drawings by a little girl and she has recorded her voice to narrate the story. It gives me big smiles each time I hear her voice. It is gorgeous.

I also like the cartoon strip "Garth" by Huw J. Davies. Huw J. creates the Garth strip for the Daily Mirror and hosts it on the Myebook platform. I love his style of drawing, and also because he wrote me into a couple of the scenes – Thanks Huw-j!



The screenshot shows the Myebook website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Myebook logo (a black circle with 'myebook' and 'get it out there' text) and the slogan 'Create. Publish. Share.' in an orange box. To the right of the logo is a 'My Account | Home' link. Below the navigation bar is a secondary bar with 'Create myebook >>' and a 'home' button with a house icon. The main content area is titled 'Book detail' and features a book cover for 'Garth' by Huw-j-. The cover shows a character in a red outfit holding a flag. To the right of the cover is a metadata section for 'Garth' by Huw-j-. The metadata includes: Author: Huw-j-, Added: 27 Oct, 2008, Last updated: 03 Jan, 2009, Category: Comics, No. of pages: 72, Views: 124385, No. of ratings: 17, Favourited: 9, Number of subscribers: 11, and Tags: garth, mirror, huw, j-, huw-j-. Below the metadata is a 'launch this myebook now!' button. At the bottom of the book detail section, there is a 'Link to, embed or share this ebook' section with a 'URL:' field containing 'http://www.myebook.com/index.php?option=ebook&', an 'Add to my site:' field with a code snippet '<a href="http://www.myebook.com/index.php?optid', and a 'Share ebook:' section with a 'SHARE' button and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

My last choice would be any of the series of Airportal magazines created by two air hostesses to promote their book, CD and fashions. They have proven how anyone without a knowledge of magazine design, creation and publishing can make a stunning promotional ebook for free. They produce fun, informative, cheeky publications on the aviation industry that are well written and quite popular. Well done, Liz & Julie.

Bob Heske is creator of [The Night Projectionist](#), a vampire horror series by publisher [Studio 407](#) with film rights optioned by [Myriad Pictures](#). Through his Heske Horror shingle, Bob self-published his critically acclaimed horror series [Cold Blooded Chillers](#). Bob's trade paperback [Bone Chiller](#) (a "best of" CBC anthology) recently won a Bronze medal in the horror category at the 2009 Independent Publisher Book Awards. Bob's works are available at Amazon, ComixPress, IndyPlanet, Haven Distribution, HeavyInk, SmallZone and DriveThruComics. You can email him at info@coldbloodedchillers.com.