



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 Carl Herring Jr. @ Three J Productions

1. Give us some quick background about Carl Herring Jr. and how "Three J Productions" came to be reality.

(CARL:) I've been reading and collecting comic books for over thirty years. I'm a fan of the comic books from the early sixties right up until the mid eighties. To me, comic books lost some of their appeal in the nineties. In my opinion, comic books during this time were being mass produced without much in the way of art or storylines, to cater to the comic book investors that were flooding the industry and less to the true comic book fans. Once I lost interest in comics during the nineties, I decided that I would create my own characters and write storylines that could entertain like the stories from days long gone. I also wanted to seek out talented artists who could recreate those master strokes reminiscent to the artists of the Silver and Bronze ages. Thus with this in mind, Three J Productions was born.



2. Describe your market niche – what segment of comic readers do you target? What makes your company unique and compelling?

(CARL:) Three J Productions' market niche is simple: I want to cater to action fans everywhere. If you're a fan of compelling storylines fueled with fight scenes, shootouts and explosions, I have the stories for you. In fact, I challenge any readers out there to find a story published by Three J Productions or written by Carl Herring Jr. that doesn't contain one of those three elements.



While I would love to see every fan of action-oriented comics get a hold of my books, I know realistically that my target audience are mostly males between the ages of thirty years old and older. Guys like

myself, who grew up reading the Silver and Bronze Age of comic books; the kind of storylines and artwork that are found mostly in reprints today.

Catering to such a small and precise audience helps define my company's uniqueness, since this sector of the market is virtually overlooked by the bigger companies and other indie publishers.

3. Three J Productions only distributes proprietary comics – i.e., the comics created by your team. Why did you decide to focus on just your comics? Any plans to expand and to add other indie titles in the future?

(CARL:) My goal is to create a brand. When fans see a book published by Three J Productions, I want them to automatically know that they're getting an action-oriented book with an entertaining storyline and exceptional artwork rendered in "old school" style for their money. To accomplish my goal, I feel it's best to focus on publishing books featuring characters created by me, with stories written by me, and drawn by artists hand-picked by me.

Once my brand has been established, I could then look into publishing other creator-owned titles. Of course, any titles added to the line-up would have to share in the company's vision of quality and help enhance the brand.

4. How did you come up with the name "Three J Productions"?

(CARL:) The company name is actually the initials of my ex-wife Julie and our two daughters, Jennie and Jessica.

5. What's your biggest seller?

(CARL:) *Crime Wave Anthology (CWA) vol. 1* is the company's biggest seller to date. Due to actively promoting the title at comic cons and over the Internet, the fan response has been good. A bi-annual publication suggested for mature readers, CWA is a collection of three stories that features the exploits of men and women of law enforcement as they fight all levels of crime to keep our city streets and the country safe. The stories center mainly around the adventures of an FBI duo, Chase and Hunt.



6. Give us the premise of your three main serial comics: a) *Jonas McCabe, The Enforcers, Black Tao*.

(CARL:) *Jonas McCabe* is an African American bounty hunter during the late 1800s. The storylines are solid westerns with enough shootouts and brawls to satisfy the most hardcore western fans, while the underlining theme takes a look at racism during the period – but with a slant on racial similarities as opposed to our differences. *Jonas McCabe*'s first story, "Reflection in the Water" (published by The Comicbook Artists Guild), takes a look at the similarities between the American Indians and African Americans.

The premise behind *The Enforcers* has Federal Drug Czar Lawrence Fulton bringing together an unlikely group of candidates to form an elite team of D.E.A. agents known as Enforcers. Recruited to train the newly-formed team is a mysterious Special Forces Commando who has his own secret agenda. Their mission is to bring down The Alliance – a group formed by New York City's most powerful drug lords in an attempt to wage an all-out war against New York's law enforcement community. The war is coming... and New York's only hope for survival ... *The Enforcers*.

The premise behind *Black Tao* has young Japanese American Steven Ito learning that he is a descendant of The Black Tao ninja clan. Like all Black Tao ninjas, Steven's years of mental and physical training has been in preparation of his destiny as the guardian of The Ultimate Power. Steven's destiny comes full circle when the centuries old spirit of Crimson Death, the Master Ninja, is released upon the world to continue his age-old battle to gain control of the Ultimate Power.



7. Tell us about your creative team; who are they and what other credits do they have under their karate black belts?

(CARL:) I've been fortunate enough to work with some of the most talented artists in the industry. On the company's first publication, *The Enforcers Limited Edition Zero Issue*, I had the opportunity to work with veteran artist Tod Smith. His credits include Spider-Man, Punisher, Green Hornet and the list goes on. He's currently working with Archie Comics. For my second project, *Jonas McCabe's "Reflection in the Water"*, I had the chance to work with another industry veteran, Ed Coutts. His credits include AC Comics' *FemForce* and Palisades Press' *VAVAVAVOOM!*

On the company's most recent publication *Crime*

Wave Anthology vol. 1, I worked with two talented newcomers – Scott E. Ambruson whose credits include *Trailer Park of Terror #6* and Chris Torres whose credits include the revival of Bob Sodaró's *Agent Unknown*. The cover art for CWA was done by the one and only Norm Breyfogle of Batman fame. The most important part of my team is the company's Creative Director, Ed Traquino. Ed does the lettering, coloring and all the technical aspects of the publications. He is a very talented artist whose credits go beyond the comic book industry, having worked for such companies as MTV, Xbox and ESPN to name a few.

8. How do you promote your company – Diamond, Haven, cons, web, author events, video book trailers? Besides your website, where else can we find you on the web?

(CARL:) Being a small company on a tight budget, I'm trying to promote my company in the most economical ways possible. My goal is to do six to eight conventions a year.

For 2009 I did seven conventions – mainly small local shows. I'll be expanding my product line, so I plan to do the bigger shows in 2010.



Promoting over the Internet is essential. I use the company's website – www.threejproductions.com – to promote and sell the company's products, but also as a networking tool to cross promote with other sites.

Hopefully fans will go to my site to buy my products, but also to link to some of the coolest Pop Culture and Entertainment sites on the Internet. To learn more about me and my characters, fans can go to www.threejproductions.blogspot.com and www.comicspace.com/threejproductions and can join Three J Productions, LLC fan club on Face book.

Three J Productions' products can also be found on www.IndyPlanet.com and for the

retailers out there, *Crime Wave Anthology vol. 1* is available for direct marketing distribution through www.ComicsMonkey.com.

The comics, graphic novels and posters are a platform to showcase the characters, which are written for crossover appeal. Three J Productions' goal as a visual arts entertainment company is to bridge the gap between the printed page with properties that I believe would do well in movies, television, animation and video games.

9. *What were your favorite comics growing up? Who would you like to work with today in terms of writers/artists?*

(CARL:) My favorite comics growing up were the comics from the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties – the Silver and Bronze Age of the comic book industry. The era of Jack Kirby, Jim Steranko, John Romita Sr. and Sal Buscema, the artists whose styles I want to emulate in my books. My favorite titles were *Captain America*, *Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *DareDevil*, and *Iron Man*. These titles were filled with powerful, action packed storylines and explosive in-your-face artwork that can only be found mostly in reprints today.

I would love the opportunity to work with Jim Steranko. His work on *Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* was a big influence on my *Enforcers* title. I'd love to see how Steranko would draw the high tech gadgets that my *Enforcers* use; elements he drew so well in the *S.H.I.E.L.D.* books.

10. *What can we expect from Three J Productions in 2010?*

(CARL:) Expect plenty of action from Three J Productions in 2010 with the release of *Crime Wave Anthology vol. 2*, plus the re-release of *The Enforcers Limited Edition Zero Issue - The Director's Cut* in full color, with more pages. Also for 2010, the company plans to have all its current publications available for distribution in digital format. These are just a few things I have planned to keep Three J Productions on course for being the first name in visual arts entertainment.

I would like to thank you Bob, and Invest Comics, for giving me the opportunity to spend time with your readers. You guys do a great job – keep it up.

Thanks Carl. And with holiday shopping season upon us, now's the time to support indie comic creators like Three J Productions and get quality action-packed entertainment in return. Speaking of "quality," our own Jay Katz's InvestComics was nominated in the 2009 Project Fanboy Awards in the "Best Comic Book Website" category. To cast your vote, [click here](#).

Bob Heske is creator of *The Night Projectionist*, a vampire OGN 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) won a Bronze medal in the horror category at the 2009 Independent Publisher Book Awards. He will release a much anticipated *Doomsday* anthology called "2012: Final Prayer" on 11/15/09. Email Bob at info@coldbloodedchillers.com.