



## 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](#), [Cold Blooded Chillers](#), and [2012: Final Prayer](#), featuring interviews and insights from indie comic artists, writers, creators, distributors and visionaries.*



### 14 Questions with Alex Leung @ Studio 407

Alex Leung, Managing Director at Studio 407, founded the red-hot indie comic creator in 2006. “We see ourselves as a writer-driven comic book company with an emphasis on concept and story, mixed with an East meets West approach,” says Studio 407’s Leung. “In some ways you could say we’re an ‘Asian Vertigo,’ as many of our titles have a bit of an edge to them, although not all of them are geared toward adults.”

In fact, in just 3 years Studio 407 has built an impressive yet eclectic library of titles with mass appeal for all ages and representing a variety of genres: from horror and super heroes to historical epics, martial arts adventure and sci-fi.



We talked to Alex to get his impressions on the past year, where his company is headed, and where he thinks the challenges and opportunities are for Studio 407 and the comics industry in the near future. Plus he shares some of his favorite comics growing up, and provides submission guidelines for getting published at Studio 407.

Read on ...

*1. Fact or fiction – did you help bring the Ring series to the US? If so, kindly give us the back story.*

(ALEX) Yes, this is true. But it is a really long story that led to a lot people suing one another. Suffice to say, it’s been documented that I brought into the US when all the studios passed initially.



2. Give us the elevator pitch on Studio 407. Why did you create this indie comic shingle, how's it been going to date, and what's in store for the future?

(ALEX) I created Studio 407 so I could tell the stories I wanted, and also create better opportunities for those stories to be developed across multiple platforms. So far we've been successful with one film in the can, two others starting up, and now we are making a push into the digital media space.

3. How did you hook up with [Myriad Pictures](#)? Does Studio 407 and Myriad Pictures collaborate on various projects – or do you just have a "first look" deal where you pitch your strongest projects to them?

(ALEX) I knew the CFO and we thought it would be good fit for the two companies to work together because our skill sets complimented one another. It's mainly a "first look" deal, but we have talked about collaborating.

4. As you wrap up 2009, let's review Studio 407's top 5 accomplishments.

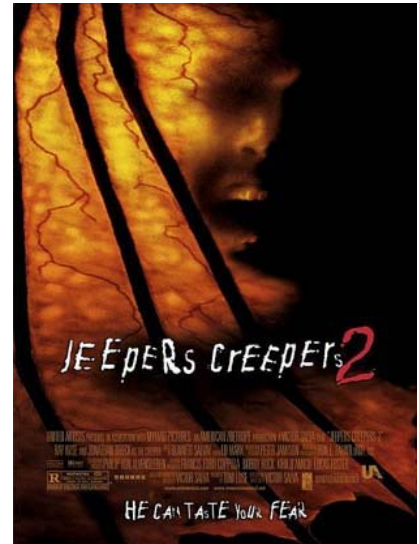
(ALEX) 2009 was very productive for us. Here are our top 5 accomplishments:

1. We were able to expand our catalogue of titles;
2. We released our first two graphic novels, [Hybrid](#) and [Smuggling Spirits](#);
3. We expanded our titles to iPhone and other digital platforms (MyEbook, DriveThruComics, etc.)
4. We partnered with Todd Kessler (creator of [Blues Clues](#)) on a storybook and video game project; and
5. We expanded into anime and initiated the development of the Smuggling Spirits feature film.

5. What top 5 goals/initiatives can you tell us about for 2010?

(ALEX) We've got a lot planned. But here's a rundown of our top 5:

1. Getting Hybrid, Smuggling Spirits and The Night Projectionist into production to be made into feature films;
2. Releasing our first Japanese Manga and Chinese Manhwa titles;

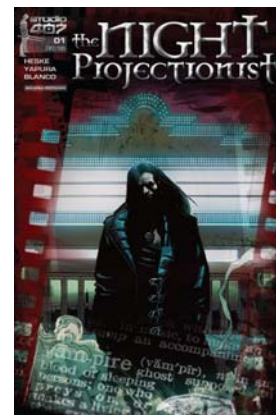
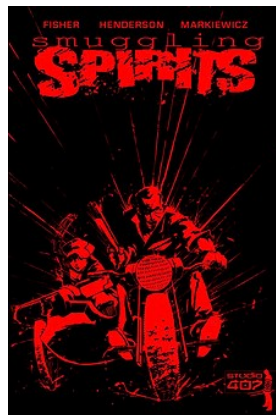


3. Producing the Smuggling Spirits anime;
4. Releasing Heroes Unlimited, which is our flagship title; and
5. Developing our catalogue of titles into motion comics.

6. You mention 3 titles will be made into movies: *Hybrid*, *The Night Projectionist*, and *Smuggling Spirits*. In a sentence or two, why should people go to theaters to see each story? What makes their premises rock-solid for both trade paperbacks and film?

(ALEX) These three titles reflect the diversity Studio 407's library; the power of our creative premises which are high concept, extremely marketable and unique; and what make us stand out as not just a comic creator, but as a full-fledged entertainment house.

- ***Hybrid* (Writer: Peter Kwong, Artist: Pablo Churin)** – This is a great creature feature, in the tradition of [The Creature from the Black Lagoon \(1954\)](#), that blends both horror and suspense. It also has strong characters that you can root for but that don't make the kinds of stupid mistakes characters always make in these films.
- ***Smuggling Spirits* (Writer: Ben Fisher, Artist: Mike Henderson)** – We're shooting this as a live-action stereoscopic 3D film, all in a black and white film noir style much like [Sin City](#). The story is very much along the lines of [Road to Perdition](#), but with monsters. Imagine if you gave David Fincher a camera from the 1940s and asked him to shoot a film noir movie. That's what this is going to look like.
- ***The Night Projectionist* (Writer: Robert Heske, Artist: Diego Yapura)** – “The night projectionist at a condemned movie theater holds his audience captive on Halloween eve as a coven of vampires descend upon the town. As the night unravels, the trapped audience learns the night projectionist is also a vampire harboring a secret. But is he friend or foe?” This is a great mystery in the tradition of the [Hammer films](#). While there will be lots of blood, action and scares in the film, it is very much a mystery story too with a great tragic anti-hero at its core which, I think, will differentiate it from other vampire films out there.



7. Studio 407 is on Comixology (phone app). How did this come about? Are you also going to be on Play Stations digital platform?

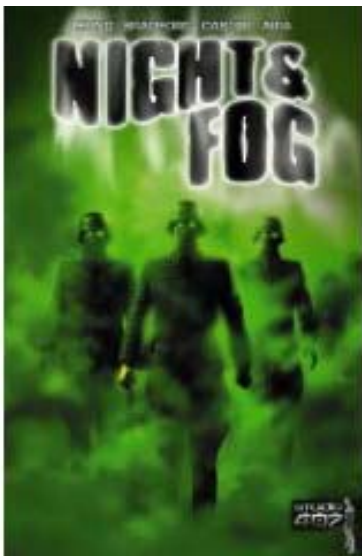
(ALEX) They actually got in touch with us, and made us an offer we couldn't refuse. We are planning to get on the consoles as well. It's all in the works.

8. Its been 3 years since you began Studio 407. What "life lessons" have you learned that you could share with our IndieCreator audience?

(ALEX) Even if you have a good, quality book, it takes time to make the comic book crowd notice. But they eventually do if you persevere and hang tough. Name recognition is huge in the industry. If you can get anyone who is recognizable to even just give a blurb on your book, do it!



9. What new genres do you see busting open in 2010 and 2011 for horror? Western zombies? Biker vampires? Or 2012 aliens?



(ALEX) There's not a lot of sci-fi horror out there right now, and I think this is a genre that is underserved but attracts a fair amount of interest. Our most successful title [Night & Fog](#) was a sci-fi horror book, but surprisingly there aren't a lot of titles like this on the market.

10. What was your first love – comics or movies? What comic book or graphic novel hasn't been made into a movie that you're dying to see?

(ALEX) Comics were probably my first love, which was why it was fairly easy for me to do both. A lot of great graphic novels have already been made into films. It's a great trend – or I should say, "marriage" – for the comics/film industries. As for a graphic novel that hasn't been adapted? yet? Probably "Torso" by Brian Michael Bendis which according to the Hollywood rumor mill may finally be back on the fast-track to [greenlit as a film](#).

11. What were your favorite comics growing up?

(ALEX) Fantastic Four was my first favorite series, and then Green Lantern, the Hulk and the X-Men followed. By the time I was an avid collector I was reading everything.

12. Do you think paper comics are dying, or do you think they will always have a place in avid comic book collectors' hearts?

(ALEX) I think there will always be a place for printed comics because they represent a different experience that's still quite different the digital one. Just as with film people, still want the different experiences of theatrical vs. home video – although it's ironic to note that one of the reasons home video revenues have gone down is because of competition from theatres. Some of that may be due to the bad economy where going to the movies is still considered cheap entertainment.

13. *Indie creators want to know – are you accepting submission? If so, what are you looking for and what are your guidelines?*

(ALEX) We are accepting submissions, but only for finished books or books where the creators are handling the production. In this case there must be at least the first issue done.

14. *Share some final thoughts on the current state of indie comics in lieu of the tough economy. Is there a light at the end of the tunnel? Finally, give us website info on where we can buy Studio 407 comics.*

(ALEX) Like a lot of companies, we've had to consolidate and prepare for the weak economy. But I think there is hope because there is so much interest in comic books and graphic novels right now, and there are still a lot of opportunities to made with them because of their trans-media potential. You can check us out at [www.studio-407.com](http://www.studio-407.com), and our graphic novels can be found on Amazon and comic stores, while our single issues can be bought through our website or at comic book stores.



**Bonus question:** InvestComics is an investing website. Name 2-4 comics (please be specific re: Title, issue #, and publisher) that you consider "must haves" in your comic book collection.

(ALEX) *Fantastic Four #199 (Marvel), Dark Knight Returns #1 (DC), Teen Titans #1 (DC), and X-men #141 (Marvel).*

*Thanks Alex! Continued success and see you at the movies in 2010.*

### ***"Hear Me, Hear Me!" Special Podcast Announcements***

I recently taped a roundtable for the [Paranormal Podcast](#) with host Jim Harold and best-selling 2012 authors [Marie D. Jones](#) and [Marshall Masters](#). You can download and listen to the podcast on iTunes on December 21<sup>st</sup>. Also, I was a guest on [Shadows in the Dark](#) radio internet program with host Jeremiah Greer and comic creators Don Smith Jr. and Jason Dube. Check out the [website](#) to listen to the program!



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) won a Bronze medal in the horror category at the 2009 Independent Publisher Book Awards. His "end times" anthology [2012: Final Prayer](#) was released on November 13, 2009. Bob's works are available online at Amazon.com Zaldiva.com, ComixPress, IndyPlanet, HeavyInk, SmallZone, DriveThruComics and YuDu.com (store). You can email Bob at [info@coldbloodedchillers.com](mailto:info@coldbloodedchillers.com).