

Digital LA - Digital Comics Panel: Indie, VFX, fans

by Kevin Winston

HOLLYWOOD - Writers, animators and VFX artists shared how they use digital and social media to create, develop, Kickstarter-fund and promote their film, TV, web series and apps to fans and like-family communities, at our fourth annual pre-Comic-Con Digital LA - Digital Comics Panel at the Nerdist Theater at Meltdown Comics.



HIGHLIGHTS:

Digital lets u create, fund and distribute your own story without having to wait for a studio greenlight. Here's how:

- **Create:** create quality content with passion that has an audience - Collaborate with friends who also have quality work and an audience/ social media following. TV writer Marc Zicree called his friends who'd worked on Battlestar Galactica VFX and other projects to help work on his Space Command movie and Kickstarter Campaign

- **Fund:** Half of the panelists use Kickstarter to fund their projects.

5 Keys to Kick-butt Kickstarter campaign:

1) Clear Project. Make sure your project is clear in the first few seconds of looking at your Kickstarter page. Don't use Kickstarter to fund a pilot; it's to fund the actual project. Your target dollars raised should match the project complexity so it doesn't look like you're going to take a year off to sit on the beach to work on your project, said one panelist.



2) Good Video. Your video is your trailer. Put some time into it cuz it needs to sell your project. Marc Zicree's video and friend support helped him reach his \$75K goal in just three days.



3) Make a range of good pledge incentives u can deliver on. Marc Zicree's Space Command movie Kickstarter campaign lets fans pledge \$5-20 to have their name listed on the film web site, and access movie clips and songs; \$500 for a cast-signed script and making-of book, \$1.5K for a walk-on role, \$5K for a film uniform costume, and \$10K for a speaking role in the film and lunch with the creators.

Make sure you can deliver. If fans can pledge \$5-100 to get a copy of a comic book, make sure you calculate shipping and mailing costs into your budget. If Kickstarter fans can pledge \$100-500 to be drawn into an online/digital comic, make sure your artists can work that into the production schedule.



4) Time your campaign / Know your audience. Know what your audience is doing. Micah Wright said he probably shouldn't have scheduled his graphic novel Kickstarter campaign during July cuz his fan base is spending money and attention on Comic-Con.

On the other hand, Marc Zicree has a Space Command panel at this year's Comic-Con, which increases awareness and pledges to his Kickstarter project.



Diallo is launching his Kickstarter campaign this fall after summer travel and writing.

5) Use social media to promote. Everyone working on the project should promote via Facebook, Twitter, etc. to increase awareness and pledges. Get fans and followers involved and have them come up with ideas for pledges u can add to your Kickstarter campaign.

- **Writing for digital.** Joelle Sellner said that when she worked on Marvel Digital Holiday Issue for iPad, she had to rethink how she wrote to make sure that each digital page had compelling action / scenes, and is a cliffhanger to the next.

This differs from a print comic where only the first and last of the 22 pages are cliffhanger.



- **Online Pop Culture Communities.** Comedian Chris Hardwick grew his Nerdist nerd -culture blog into the YouTube-funded Nerdist Channel, and the Nerdist News web site with nerd culture movie, TV reviews and news.

Nerdist recently expanded to offline events with the Nerdist Theater venue space in the back of Meltdown Comics which hosts weekly comedy nights, speakers, our Digital LA panel, and the NerdTerns web series about life in a comic-book shop. Nerdist also spearheaded the Course of the Force event, a lightsaber relay from Santa Monica Pier to San Diego Comic-Con to benefit Make A Wish foundation.



The Nerdist channel and web site use social media to drive traffic to each other, rally audiences to attend events, and even to get interns.

Mo Fathelbab, Nerdist Theatre producer and co-creator of the NerdTerns web series, says he can tweet "we need interns" or "we need PAs" and fans show up immediately to help out.

"You're not marketing to fans, you're engaging a community, like family," said Brian Walton, Nerdist News editor-in-chief.



- **VFX.** Digital lets VFXers use Maya and other digital tools to create cool effects. Niki Hillier, a VFX coordinator at Zoic Studios, works on True Blood, Falling Skies and other TV shows. She sometimes tweets "working late at the office" without giving away any show details to create excitement for her next episode. She worked on the VFX fangs in recent seasons of True Blood.

- **Social Media.** Use Facebook and Twitter to give fans inside peeks of development of projects, share pics, videos, get their input, promote release dates and Kickstarter projects, engage, and develop a relationship.

"You're not just making fans, you're making friends," said Steven Sievers of Supa Pirate Booty Hunt. Several panelists said u should treat fans like family.



THANKS to our speakers:

- Marc Zicree, TV / animation writer (Star Trek (TV), Sliders, Twilight Zone, SuperFriends, He-Man, Smurfs). Created Kickstarter campaign to fund Space Command movie, raising nearly \$200K. @MarcZicree

- Brian Walton, Nerdist News. Editor in Chief. @NerdistNews @B2Walton

- Joelle Sellner, writer, Marvel Digital Holiday Issue, DC Comics Cartoon Network Action Pack. TV/animation: Avengers, Teen Titans, Jackie Chan Adventures, Ben 10. Web series: Monster High and Samurai Daycare. @whereisjoelle

- Mo Fathelbab, NerdMelt. On-Site Producer at The @Nerdist Theatre at @MeltdownComics, The @MutantSeason's sidekick & co-creator of @NerdTernsShow on @NerdistChannel. @MoFathelbab

- Steve Sievers, Supa Pirate Booty Hunt animated series, creator, writer, animator, & voice actor. @stevesievers @SPBAnimation

- Niki Hillier, Zoic Studios, VFX coordinator. (True Blood, Once Upon A Time, Mad Men, Falling Skies, The Secret Circle). @nikihi

- Diallo Jackson, writer comics (The Paranormals) and video games (Sherlock Holmes Mysteries: The Case of the Innocent Man). @theArmag3ddon @asw_studioworks

- Micah Wright, writer on comics, TV and video games. Formerly writer at Nickelodeon (Angry Beavers), Wildstorm Comics (Stormwatch: Team Achilles), and games (PlayStation Move Heroes, Transformers, THQ's Destroy All Humans). Using Kickstarter for graphic novel project Duster.

- Moderator: Kevin Winston, Digital LA, founder / CEO @DigitalLA @kevinwinston



THANKS AUD FOR great tweet-notes via #DigitalLAComics

RT @prawy: #DigitalLAComics digital creators: Flash for illustration then AfterEffects/Protools for sound, composite & deploy to YouTube



RT @prawy: #DigitalLAComics when writing for comics: cliffhanger at end of each page, good flow, don't exceed talent of the illustrator

RT @MsChiefFTW Great #DigitalLAComics panel @NerdMelt! <http://pic.twitter.com/gJ4BHsqF>

RT @Leah_Cevoli: "If you engage your fans and give quality content, you need to have faith in them also." - @NerdistNews



RT @SpaceCommandMov: "You have to treat your fans like family, not consumers. No one wants to be pitched at." #DigitalLAComics #SpaceCommand

RT @Leah_Cevoli: "You're not just making fans, you're making friends." @SteveSievers #DigitalLAComics