Digital apps to restore love for comics

By [Wesley Lynch](#)   16 Mar 2013

The graphic novel was at its most popular in the late 60s to 70s but saw a steady decline in mainstream audiences thereafter as other modes of media and entertainment took over i.e. movies and the rise of computer games, which stole from their following - leaving comic books to become cherished collectibles in dusty boxes of diehard fans.

This was not the end for comics, however, as the film industry seized the opportunity to bring Marvel and DC comics to life on the big screen. And so the revival began - with a more fervent following than ever - with movies like the Avengers, X-men, and Spider Man topping box offices all over the world as people of all ages flocked to see them - thus comic fandom reached new heights.

Disney just recently bought Marvel, which means we can expect more comic book themed movies, making this a sustainable venture for the technology and comic book industries in the long-term. With the release of each comic-based movie, so are merchandise, re-releases of graphic novels, and themed apps brought out to coincide with it. Here we can observe the trend of trans-media, which digital comics can take full advantage of.

And so the digital revolution began, and comics had to keep up, with more and more people engaging in digital reading. But graphic novels still had a few hurdles to overcome before they could thrive in the digital space. Earlier devices could not support the comic format in a way that would not affect the quality of the comic readers' experience - as many eReaders available featured only black and white and were slow and large.

Digital graphic novel: The experience

Diehard comic collectors may fight the revolution towards digital graphic novels, arguing that the experience could not rival the age-old paperback. Although digital comics have some undeniably influential selling points. It has fared extremely well with fans as the newer generations of eReaders are more amenable and beneficial to the comic book experience. The Kindle Fire, Nook tablet, iPad, Samsung Tablets and even some smartphones like the Galaxy S III support these apps and multiple formats of digital comics. The digital versions are also affordable, in some cases a third of the price of the physical version. Some may argue that because the artist adds colour digitally, experiencing the comic pixel to pixel, rather than pixel to paper, is closer to the artist's intention and a truer representation.

With the smaller screens the functionality to view one panel at a time creates a uniquely cinematic experience, a type of blow by blow storytelling that cannot be experienced in any other form of the comic. Another draw card to the digital comic is availability and accessibility - digital comics are released on the same day as the paper versions, and are not subject to availability or only accessible at niche publications resellers - but published, purchased, and read - all on the same day.

When comics and apps collide

There are several sites and apps that are thriving in this niche industry, that are simultaneously having a tangible impact on the revival of graphic novel reading and driving the consumption of digital comics.

Websites like comiXology, Dark Horse Comics, and DC are dominating the international markets - with DC bringing out more than 100 graphic novels to tablets since their choice to distribute on mobile.

South African based digital publications solution provider, Snapplify, has delivered a highly functional mobile app for Ka Boom! Studios to sell and distribute its graphic novels. Its app successfully sells original Peanuts! comics and graphic novels with integrated subscriptions that its readers can enjoy on their tablets and smartphones.

Return of niche content

Snapplify moving into the digital comic book space can only result in one thing; providing a level playing field for big and small publishers to sell their digital comics globally on the mobile stores.

The acknowledged trend of trans-media, the tablet industry, and app development, have all played major roles in the revival and digital movement of graphic novels, and will continue to shape the landscape of its future development.

ABOUT WESLEY LYNCH

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