

Sean Wang and His Space Opera Comic *Runners*

by Kat Avila

Sean Wang was mentioned in my summary of Comic-Con International artist talent in [JADE Magazine's September 2004 issue](#). I decided to revisit him because I had been impressed by the quality of his space opera comic *Runners: Bad Goods*.

At Comic-Con 2004, the cover of Issue 3 had caught my eye. It was a shot of the whale-sized interstellar freighter Khoruysa Brimia under attack by three smaller rogue ships. And Sean Wang's booth presentation was particularly well thought-out, designed to quickly inform the overwhelmed convention attendee about his comic. This year, Wang is a silver sponsor of Free Comic Book Day on May 7th.



I met you at last year's Comic-Con International in San Diego. At that time, you were selling copies of your independent comic Runners. Runners is definitely not about track and field. How would you summarize the storyline?

It's basically a fun sci-fi action adventure that chronicles the misadventures of a motley alien crew of smugglers. The first story arc is a light action romp that finds the group trying to complete a particularly dangerous run under constant attack by pirates, bounty hunters, and the police. It also lays the initial groundwork for the more epic story to come.

What artistic and environmental influences are we seeing in Runners?

There's a wide range of influences on my work but the original *Star Wars* trilogy would have to be the biggest one, since that's what I grew up on. I loved the space opera feel and the cool ships and alien designs. Surprisingly, that kind of story never seemed to find a place in comics, which is one of the reasons I started doing *Runners* -- to fill that void. The other major influence would be *The Lord of the Rings*. I plan for my series to eventually snowball into a much more epic story, so that would be my benchmark as far as big complex stories go.

Runners has a five-issue story arc. Runners #5 was released this past February. Runners #1 is being reissued this May with changes. Why did you think it was necessary to make changes?

The issue that's coming out in May is part of the Free Comic Book Day promotion where comic stores offer certain comics for free to anyone who stops in that day [May 7th]. I really wanted to participate this year, but didn't have the time in my schedule to do a whole new story. I had already planned to touch up the artwork and lettering in the first issue for the trade paperback collection, so I just decided to release that "remastered" version as my Free Comic Book Day book.

As for why I decided to make those changes in the first place, I changed some things stylistically about the look of the series with the second issue. So I knew that for the trade paperback, I'd want to go back and tweak the first issue so that it matched the look of the later issues. That way the entire story arc would feel more unified and people wouldn't be distracted by any discrepancies in art style.

Runners is published by Serve Man Press. Where did the name come from? The logo of the open-mouthed alien with the knife and fork in his hands is cute and funny.

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Since I knew I was going to be doing a sci-fi book, I wanted a publisher name that had a hint of sci-fi to it. And I also wanted it to be fun since *Runners* is a fun book. So the name Serve Man Press actually comes from an old Twilight Zone episode, *To Serve Man*, which is about a group of aliens that come to earth, gain the trust of the people and begin transporting them in batches back to their own planet. An alien book is discovered and when decoded the title reads "To Serve Man." Naturally, the real kicker to the episode comes when the book itself is deciphered and it's revealed that *To Serve Man* is a cookbook! So that pretty much explains why I made the press logo an alien with a knife and fork and bib. Morbid ... but cute!

What job pays the bills?

I'm currently working on *Runners* in my free time, that is, nights and weekends. For my full-time job, I work as an artist at a computer game company called Cyberlore Studios. As far as full-time jobs go, it's pretty fun since I get to do a wide range of art tasks like concept design, storyboarding, and modeling and texturing characters and objects. But, of course, my ultimate goal is to get to a point where I'm doing comics full-time.

In your development as a self-described "comic creator & game artist," what has helped you the most?

I'd like to say just spending a lot of time drawing. These days I seem to do that through the actual production of each comic issue. But unfortunately I find that I don't have much time to practice my art through sketching these days, and that's something I really miss. As far as practicing goes, I found that sketching people from magazines was a great help, and it's a much better way to learn real anatomy than sketching from other comics. Writing-wise, I dissect a lot of the books, movies, and TV shows that I watch to find out what works and what doesn't. I think that helps me when crafting my own stories but does tend to hamper my enjoyment of those stories in a lot of cases.

For more information on Sean Wang, visit <http://www.seanwang.com>

For more information on Free Comic Book Day, visit <http://www.freecomicbookday.com>



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