

Curious Campbelltown – Rated “G” for geeky.

ZOE ROSS with COMIC ARTISTS PODCAST

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ZR Hi, I'm Zoe Ross and welcome to another episode of Curious Campbelltown. Today we have an all-star cast of guests, Matt Lin, Marcelo Baez and Karen Beilharz. Would you like to introduce yourselves and talk about what kinds of work you do. Maybe talk about the style of your art or your chosen genre.

ML I am an illustrator/graphic designer. I mostly work in publishing just because I like books and stories, but I do work in promotions and paint murals and occasionally do background acting in movies and TV shows. But I can draw in Disney style, Marvel style general cartooning partly because at one stage I was working for a company designing toys for McDonalds, Nestle, Disney so I was doing happy meal toys that sort of stuff. So I had to learn how to draw in various styles but my personal favorite and love is the Anime/Manga style.

MB My name is Marcelo Baez. I am a comic book illustrator and I'm also a commercial illustrator. I draw I guess in a superhero style like a western style. I do appreciate all types of comic art though. I do a lot of freelance for companies around America thanks to my agent in the US. I do a lot of workshops for kids, adults and teenagers and I love talking comic books. Yeah, so you will have a lot of trouble stopping me from yapping eventually.

ZR That's what we're here to do.

KB I am Karen Beilharz I am a writer and editor. I write all sorts of things. At the moment I am working on a young adult fantasy novel as well as a middle grade fantasy adventure comic. In the past I have also written science fiction and slice of life and fantasy and that sort of thing. As an editor I edit all sorts of stuff as well. It's hard to pin down I've edited fiction, I have edited prose, essays, articles occasionally non fiction books, magazines and podcasts even. Occasionally I get the very, very great privilege of editing comics which I really enjoy.

MB I didn't know you edited, I just thought you wrote.

KB No I do both.

ZR What do you love most about your job and what are the biggest challenges that you face.

KB As a writer I obviously love telling stories and the work of creation. I love working in comics in particular because that collaborative aspect, because I don't draw at all, is just really fun. Having someone else to sound ideas off, to work together on a common vision. Just being able to surprise each other and somehow in that combination of the two of us working together, even if we're clashing sometimes,

it is just amazing to see what comes out of that, I really, really enjoy that. On the editing front I love helping creators achieve their vision. Sometimes it's not easy. One particular creator I've been working with, I have seen his script about two or three times and what he's trying to do is really not easy and I'm hoping that the feedback that I give him is helpful. But helping creators to be able to achieve that vision and make it better in whatever way it is even if it's a small thing like cutting words or commas to bigger picture things looking at the structure of your story or whatnot I really enjoy that, it's a lot of fun. Obviously I'm emotionally invested in the project but I like helping people do that sort of thing.

ZR Thank you, what do you guys enjoy.

MB For me I enjoy the whole thing. I enjoy the beginning process, like if I get a script, I love reading it a few times trying to start to picture in my mind the way I break down the story. If it's a children's book or if it's a comic book obviously it's something visual because I'm an illustrator so I like the story telling process of OK, how am I going to break this story down into pictures, the different steps. That's the most interesting part for me like trying to break it down when things are still rough and loose. I work with a pencil to begin with just on paper working out some ideas. I love that layout process which I think Matt would agree to that initial process is so much fun because there's so many things that you can come up with early on and there's no wrong idea, there's no wrong way to do it. Then you start to edit yourself and break it down and make it look more interesting or walk away.

5 mins

The great thing is to have a break, walk away from what you're doing, you go feed the cats, you go feed yourself. You might need a toilet break and then you come back and the great thing is you'll look at your drawings again or if you're working digitally you'll look at your iPad or whatever and you'll realise OK this just needs this and this and then you're ready for the next bit which might be cleaning it up, working out the colours or whatever way you work, your particular style. That's what I love the best, I love the beginnings, it's always this is so good, I am so excited and everything's honeymoon and then you've got to work it out and it's like this is a lot of work. This is going to take how long, but anyway I find that initial bit is very electrifying. It's like falling in love, it really is. Think about it, you've got to commit to a long project. I am working on a few long projects at the moment and the long game is like oh. If it's a collaboration, it's great because then you're talking with someone and they're keeping you on point. If you're working for a client, you've got no choice because there's money involved, if it's a commercial project. The self-motivated projects, they're the hard ones when they're your own, the passion projects. Much as you're excited it's like this is going to take ages. Can't I just go and play another video game.

ZR Do you find that you're more critical of your own projects. Your passion projects?

MB Oh yes, we all are I guarantee you. Matt you would be and it slows you down.

ML I've been sitting on my passion projects. Your own passion projects for me anyway gets put to a side for the paid projects, the commercial ones. That could be an excuse, self-sabotage. Like you're saying, I get it so looking at my sketches and roughs for some of my own projects, for me a lot of the excitement comes because I freelance, it's the unknown. So if I get that email or I get that call it's like whoa where did this come from and they're asking me to do that. That's kind of exciting for me. The other exciting bit for me is when I do workshops seeing what the students or attendees, how they change what I have taught them and they come up with their own little ideas and they create their characters and see their imagination, it's like wow look at this that's really cool, I might steal that idea.

MB I agree, because I see kids come up with ideas and I think I would never have come from that angle and think I am totally stealing that.

ML I'm showing you how to draw this character and they have gone and done all this, and I think wow that's really good. That bit for me, the teaching part is really exciting. Because I do the workshops and stuff is just the travel. I get to travel around a bit and see places I probably wouldn't have chosen so that's nice.

ZR I'm glad you mentioned that because I was actually going to ask you guys about travelling, getting to move around with your job. Have you got any cool stories about anything from your travels and have you met anyone really cool.

ML The people that work at Ingleburn Library like Wayne. Big shout out to Wayne and Stephanie. When I was working for the company doing the happy meal toys I was lucky to get flown to LA and went to a premiere for, this is a giveaway of my age. Disney were bringing out the animated version of Tarzan so we needed to create some happy meal toys and stuff. The style books weren't out yet but Disney was doing this premiere, a fifteen minute show or whatever, and I remember that day and the boss was like do you have a passport and I was like yeah why and she went you're going to LA. I was like when and she said on Saturday. So I got flown to LA and went to the Kodak Theatre or somewhere like that got shown this premiere thing of Tarzan. So I was in the theatre with my notepad and just sketching furiously away, drawing as much as I could and then after they took us, in the foyer they had all the maquettes the big statues that are made to help the animators animate then. So I spent a bit of time there drawing all those and after that we went to the after party or whatever and that was just nuts. They had an actual anaconda in there, people were having their photo taken holding this anaconda. They had all the wait staff were dressed as the old cliché colonial explorers, pith helmets and the safari things and there were these massive cauldrons with food in there. We all got given like Tarzan merchandise. I think there some chimpanzees there, a few other animals which just seemed so bizarre and crazy. Then I got a little bit of a slight tour around the Disney studios, that was amazing. That was very cool.

ZR Very cool, how do you follow that up?

10 mins

MB Not as cool as that, that was really cool. I have been invited to the regular comic shows as a guest like OZ comic con and Super Nova in the past and I have met on and off big stars. The funny thing is I am just a local common creator I find that you have to act really cool in the green room, really calm. There's that thing when you're in the green room and actually I wasn't in the green room but I remember I was at my table and the lady from Star Trek that played Uhura, the original Uhura and I wasn't a Trekkie then but I am a Trekkie now, luckily I recognized who she was, I still knew who she was, Michelle Nicholls that's her name sorry I should have mentioned the actor's name. She came around to my table and I don't know why, she was just bored and she was walking around the show and she came to my table and was looking at my work and she said some nice things and I was like oh wow thank you very much. Years later I was like that was pretty cool. I have met people on and off the shows, but the main thing is you try to keep your cool. Because I'm a fan too, I work in the industry, I've got an agent in New York, and they send me work. I've done work for Marvel and bits and pieces, so I have been lucky enough to work for big commercial things and do my own private work as well but it's still a thrill because you're meeting people that you watch on TV and on shows.

ML Didn't you meet that guy who was in Magic Mike?

MB Oh yeah.

ML Joe Manganello, I just remember his name from a movie which I probably can't say. It was Big Dick Ritchie.

ZR Joe is a massive D & D fan. He is a huge advocate for Dungeons and Dragons.

MB He looks like he could be in a Dungeons and Dragons movie, just give him a sword. I met him at an after party. I knew who he was, but I wasn't that into his stuff but I kind of recognized him. He said hello to me, and I was like how you going. I was sitting with a bunch of other people I didn't know, and I felt so out of place. You try to talk to people. I did go to a Star Trek premiere at the Opera House after an Oz Comic Con and I met Amber Benson who used to be on Buffy because I used to like Buffy. Amber Benson got talking to my wife and they hit it off like they were old friends and that was hilarious. That's the little perks that you get meeting people like that. For me personally the stuff I really like is I am into comic books so when actual comic book artists that I admire come from overseas or even locally that I admire and you get to meet them at shows, that's the real thrill. Most people probably don't care that much but they inspire me directly with my work so I will be excited about meeting them. Matt and I, what's that local guy we like, Ashley Wood. We met Ashley Wood and he's from Perth and he's done big things. He's worked over in America, done Spawn comics and done heaps of work and he's doing his own work which is just brilliant, mind blowing really amazing work but he doesn't do many shows. He has started to do more shows so we got to meet him in Sydney a few years ago. That was a thrill for me because I just love Ashley Wood's work. Most people would be like Ashley Wood, who's Ashley Wood. Look him up Google Ashley Wood, he's Australian and he's just so amazing, his work is really inspiring. He's so edgy, he's very

groundbreaking because he mixes a lot of different techniques as well. It's almost graphic design. He does painting, he mixes painting with the medium of digital, traditional media. Google Ashley Wood. Things like that are really cool.

15 mins

KB I agree, meeting an Australian creators. It's been lovely since I started making comics actually meeting other people in the Australian comics community. I feel like there's more people that I haven't met that are making amazing work. That's really, really fun. I got to meet Tom Taylor at Super Nova one time and talked to him about writing comics, that was really fun.

MB That's the stuff that inspired you because you're on the same wavelength to a point and a lot of them are quite generous with their time and they're willing to chat to you and that's why I find the younger generation when they come up to us at shows and this is really weird, but some of the young people come up to us with their portfolios and they are like all starstruck and I am like really I'm just a local guy don't get too excited. They're really excited mainly because they see who you worked for and the type of work you do and they obviously like the quality of work that you do. They obviously have their own passionate dream to do something similar. I try to be just as generous as the people that have helped me out in the past. Another person I should mention is Glen Lumsdon, he is an Australian comic artist who is not that well known now but he was doing big things in the 90s working over at Marvel doing Phantom, a one off Phantom thing and he was doing some Batman things at DC but I don't think it ever eventuated which was really sad because he had all this work done and he showed some of the work at some early conventions here in Sydney. I got to meet him and I remember I was really young and I got to meet him and I was so nervous. I don't know why, he was so talented, and I was so hopeless back then and he was really generous. He was so friendly and nice to me and even looked at my portfolio. He looked at my bad drawings and said look this is what you've got to do. He grabbed a piece of tracing paper, I don't know why he had tracing paper, and he drew over the top of it and he fixed my anatomy and he talked about this is what you need to practice, you should do more of this, you should do more of that and he was just so generous with me with his time. I just remember thinking wow this is great. I was still like starstruck in a way because I thought this guy is a proper comic book artist and I am just a little geek from Dapto. That's where I grew up. He helped me out and I was always grateful for that, and I never forgot that too. I feel when someone is genuinely looking for help and you can see they've made a real effort, and their portfolio shows real promise I always try to help them out the same way that Glen helped me and a few others have helped me as well.

ZR Do you find that there is opportunity for getting better in Australia that you don't have to go overseas as much. I've got friends who do voice acting and different kinds of media and they find that their opportunities are in the States or overseas, do you find that the Australian industry is getting better for creative media.

KB It's a very hard question. In Australia we don't have much of a comic industry. There are only a few publishers who actually work in that space. There's a whole bunch of independent self-publishers.

ML There are larger publishers, they just do imprints. They usually buy what's already been published from Europe and things like that. I kind of get it because they've got margins and they play it safe but like Karen was saying independent scene is pretty big. But then again it's all changing, Marvel and DC were at one stage the big and it's not so big at the moment. They are currently going through things whereas Manga is exploding. I think if we're talking about comics I think now a lot of especially in the educational system, a lot of librarians if you want to call it that or people who bring books in and things like that are now actually seeing the value of visual literacy and actually the connection with what gets borrowed and what I suppose what people are asking for. Is that what you're finding?

20 mins

KB Oh yes definitely. I've rung the book club at my kid's school, and I can see more and more comics in the pages of the catalogue that comes out six times a year which is really, really very good. Obviously, it is scholastic and the big publishers Penguin, Random House are now investing more in the comic space. Mostly middle grade at this stage to the point of saturation but I think it's slowly spilling over into young adults. Hopefully adult comics too but we're not quite at that stage. Certainly some of the older legacy publishers publish adult comics but in the trade format rather than single issues. I feel like single issues; there's a place for them but it's dying off a little bit or it's switching more to digital. I think in Australia, if you want to be printed, published traditionally you do have to go overseas. I think it's a lot harder to do that in Australia. With the current publishing houses are offering like comics publishing. There have been a couple like Campbell White published by Top Shelf and Pat Grant. ***Name hard to make out Aussie female comic book artist mentioned*** was published by...

MB She did some DC work as well.

KB Oh did she.

MB Yes, she some Robin or what's his name Night Wing thing.

KB You're thinking of Nicholas Scott.

MB It's some kind of circus thing when Robin was working in the circus or something. I'm pretty sure it was her. I think I saw it at the library.

KB She had a young adult book as well published, but I can't remember who the publisher was.

MB I forgot about her work, her work is really nice, I like her work.

KB Sarah Winifred as well. I can't remember her publisher, but she's done quite a few books with them. Remy Li who lives in Melbourne. She's done a whole lot of children's comics. There are a lot of creators who are working in Australia and

getting published by overseas publishers, probably less so with Australian publishers. I don't know we just don't have that here which is a bit of a shame. I sort of understand because it's expensive, putting in colour is a lot more risk. I feel like Australia as a nation even though we are getting a wonderful influx of middle grade comics and more and more children reading comics and growing up with comics, I feel like as well, I don't know, I think it can be hard sometimes for them to get hold of them. Like the Scholastic Book Club is a really good way to do it, the school library, obviously community libraries and things. Certainly more and more bookshops are having their own comic section and it's a nice thing that grows larger.

ZR There has been a massive growth in graphic novels but also Manga as you said especially with our libraries as well with the collections. There is a huge focus on graphic novels in our libraries. Ours has undergone changes over the last few years and we now finally have an adult collection of graphic novels now that has Mature content and that sort of thing. Not just mature content its also stories that are focused on adults as the main character. How we separate them out from the young adults.

ML I think back to your question, you don't have to go overseas. Before at one stage if you wanted to work for say Marvel you had to go to America with a portfolio, like a physical portfolio and knock on doors and see people whereas now with the internet, as long as you've got an online presence and your work is on line and it's clear and things like that you can get work from overseas. I've had people from America contact me through Instagram, can you do this, can you do that. I've seen that kind of thing. You've got to take the opportunities.

KB These days the barriers to self-publishing are lower than ever before. There is a certain skill set that you need to learn to self-publish but it's not hard. Anybody can do it in a sense and if you show that you can do the work, that often leads to more work because people can see what they do. They think oh I want someone that can do that sort of thing. Work leads to work.

25 mins

MB Work always leads to work. I think that's the main thing that people to realise if they're worried about what should I do. You should just do what you want to do, just do the best version you can do and put it out there digitally because I think like Karen said there's no real risk publishing digitally. Just put your best work out there. What's that thing build it and they will come. It's happened to me because I was going through a stage in my career where I was doing a lot of illustration work for small educational companies in America which was paying the bills. It was so boring, the work I was doing and I felt like I was stuck in a rut and I thought to myself I'm not having fun doing this anymore. So I remember thinking alright I'm just going to draw. What do I want to draw, I want to draw Wolverine, something goofy stuff that I like the old Marvel comics I used to read. I drew a Wolverine then I thought hang on a minute I'm going to draw Wolverine as a

Samurai on a horse. At that stage I think I was getting into Japanese woodblock art, so I did my version of that and I drew it and put it online and the weird thing was I did that for fun and I actually got a call from Marvel for a job. Because I just did it for fun. I'm not saying that's going to work every time. That's what I mean, if you persistently focus on a thing that you like and do the best you can not just for comics, for anything in life really.

KB You feel like that a creative career that you guys have found out that people's attitudes towards them is that it does involve all these unknowns and so I know parents are like I don't want my child going into a creative career because the path is not clear. But it's one of the really cool things about it I think because you kind of stumble upon work and different jobs that's fallen into your lap sometimes because of stuff that you've done.

MB Do you think like, and this question is for you two Matthew and Karen sorry Matt, do you need to have a certain resilience or personality to do this because you need to be self-motivated. That's the other thing too, I don't want to get too existential, but you do need to be self-motivated to do what we do. It's not like a job where you go to and click in and the boss is watching you and you've got to do A, B, C and D before lunch. You've got to do everything yourself. Matt actually helps me quite a lot. I rely on Matt quite a lot, I ring him and I ask him dumb questions like Matt what am I supposed to do with this tax thing, I don't understand it. You know what I mean, there's certain business aspects where I'm just so hopeless. But I try and get help obviously but I find the other thing: what do you guys think, I find for me personally you have to be self-motivated; you have to be able to get knocked back and learn to fall down and pick yourself back up. Because in my career I have found that's helped me. I've even had people I love dearly say to me, you're wasting your time why are you doing this. These are people that I trust and love but I know deep down inside of me I can do this, I can get through this and I am going to get better and obviously I have. These people don't say it in a bad way like they want you to fail but they're worried because they can see how you're struggling. What do you guys think about that?

KB I reckon that talent is one thing but perseverance and resilience like if you've got that, that in a sense serves you so much better in the long term. Because as you say, you will face more rejections than acceptances. It's not personal, often it's to do with publishing schedules and budgets and deadlines and all the rest of it but you have to pick yourself up and keep going and keep putting out the next thing and that may not succeed as well as you want it to but you just have to keep putting up the next thing. Someone said "Every new book is a chance to try again."

MB That's a good point. That word you said, persistence, perseverance.

KB It's underrated, but you're right, often when you're doing creative work it is you just being self-motivated to do it. That is one of the reasons why I like the collaboration because I've got someone else working with me and egging me on.

ML What, sometimes I don't like collaborating. I find the other person annoying

(laughter)

KB Often if I feel like oh I don't feel like doing this, I don't know what I'm doing or I'm finding it really hard I owe this other person and if I don't do it then that's not good for them.

30 mins

MB It does help. I'm doing a few little collaborations at the moment, but I can see Matt's point too. Matt Lynn does not play well with others. But I get that too because the other beauty of working for yourself too is that you do everything yourself, so you know exactly how you want to do it and Matt and I both have a background in graphic design. So that's a big help for what we do now as illustrators, having a background in graphic design has helped us I know personally for me and I know Matt's background as well. It's helped him a lot as well because we were taught how to deal with printers in the old day when you had to work with printers before internet, and how to prepare your artwork. If you think about a comic book, everyone just thinks about just the storytelling. First page, next page, spreads, splashes all the fancy things you've got to do but when you put a book together, you've actually got to put in a program, put it together then you've got to do the cover, the inside front cover, the inside back cover and there's got to be a flow to it too. So, with a background in graphic design, Matt and I already know a lot of that because we have done that for other people, the book publishers. We've done brochure work, so we understand that and bringing that skillset into making comic books and making kids books has helped us enormously. It makes us like really big snobs too because when we see bad graphic design, we're like how could they do all that work on the interior of a book and then the front cover is a mess. You've got to pay attention to every nook and cranny. But that could be me just being fussy.

KB I get really nitpicky.

ML Especially lettering and typography for me, that's one of my big annoyances. Because when I was graphic designing, one of the things that I really wanted to be was a really big-time typographer like Neville Brody and those kind of people. I wanted to be edgy like David Carson and do real cool typography. So I get really annoyed especially when I see the letter W next to an A.

MB There's that massive gap between where you could park a boat between them.

KB The cross bar "l" being in the wrong spot.

MB I actually mess that up personally, that's something I need to work on.

ML It's not just comics. The graphic design especially like in Karen's case, books, novels, there is an art to laying out the text, what do they call it, typesetting a book. That's not just oh I'll just throw the work in and let it go. The way the words sit and what position, you know what they call a widow and the word is by itself it can really affect the story or the paragraph if only that last sentence is on another page that you've got to turn, that can affect the story. All those little things that seem like nuances and maybe nitpicking, they're quite important.

MB And names too, where names shouldn't be broken up. I hate what I see like in graphic design a name broken up on two separate lines. Like the first name and the last name. It drives me mad, I see it all the time. Not just in books I mean in daily things. How can they do that. Who would put Hugh Jackman's name on two different lines shouldn't it be Hugh Jackman. I'm not affiliated with Hugh Jackman I have to tell you and I have not met Hugh Jackman.

ZR On the topic of books and whatnot, are there any series that you have read recently that you would recommend to people. Anything that's really stood out recently as a new publication.

MB It's got to be Dandadan. You've got to get out there and read it. Read Dandadan or get a Netflix account and watch the anime but it's not as good as the Manga. I just absolutely love Dandadan.

35 mins

KB What's it about?

MB It's basically and a girl. They meet. The boy is into aliens. She is into paranormal and they have this contrast because she doesn't believe aliens exist. He doesn't believe guy's spirits and all that exist so they kind of challenge each other and due to a whole lot of things, things happen. Powers evolve and things go missing but for me it's such an unpredictable story, that's probably the reason that I love anime and Manga. I used to be a big reader of DC and Marvel and that kind of stuff. If I do read I suppose American if you want to call it that, western. I tend to read more of the Indie stuff or things that, what do they call it again the other publishers, Image just because they're a little bit different. It's a bit edgy. But with Manga for me I find the unpredictability is so amazing and exciting. Like where did that come from, I never saw that coming and the dialogue is amazing.

(I can pick up a Marvel thing and still seeing the same boring dialogue they did back when. I think God who is writing this stuff and I am probably cutting my head off right now. Please cut this bit out. I'm not going to get any more work from Marvel)

Yes, so for me at the moment I am a big fan of Dandadan and I am kind of excited of My Hero academia just because coming to an end. I love One Piece but it's gone on for quite some time.

MB That's the only thing I don't appreciate about Manga how it never ends.

KB It does end.

ML It depends on the title, which title.

MB Fifty books later come on.

KB I read, it's not new but Haikyu. Haikyu is Japanese for volleyball. And I'm not into sports and I don't actually read that much Manga, but I love Haikyu because the

characters are so much fun and the humour comes from the characterisation and even the emotional arcs of the characters are really satisfying. It is probably one of the most satisfying things that I have ever read. But it does go for 302 chapters.

MB Does that mean 302 books. How many actual books would you put on a shelf?

KB I think it was 45, but now they're releasing them in collections of like three of those together.

MB So there was 45. See, that's my OK, that's my only problem. Like I I am. I'm the least manga-y person in this room. But I do love. There are some Manga that I I hold near and dear to my heart. Some of it just goes for too long like I can take 10 to 20 books maybe and I and then that's good. Like I loved OK this is. How old I am. I loved Lone Wolf and cub and I own a lot of lone wolf and cub, but I don't think I have the whole thing. And it does get a bit repetitive, but I like samurais chopping each other up in the snow and all those long you know, long stares across, you know, these villages and then they chop ninjas up into lots of tiny pieces. It's amazing. But I don't know if I can take 40 odd books of the same thing. I just, I need. I need to change of gear. Yeah, it's like eating the same food for me. I love pizza, but I could not eat pizza every day for a month.

ML That's why you've got to read different books. You have like about four on the go.

MB Yeah, you have to have 4 on the go.

ML Like I'm reading My Hero Academia spy family. I just finished Golden Kamuy. Yeah, I'm reading. I'm reading that. And that's actually that, that finished that book 31. And I love that one, too, actually. Cause not only was it the art, but the characters in it were amazing. And I got to learn a little bit about the Anjin culture so that native culture up in Hokkaido. So yeah, that was really quite eye opening.

ZR It's weird how educational manga can be, yeah, they could teach you some really cool stuff.

KB All about volleyball?

ZR I know that food wars has a bit of a, you know, iffy reputation, but they have genuine recipes and teach you about food and cooking. Yeah

ML Like Delicious in Dungeon, yeah.

If you need to know how to cook a hippogriff do they cook a hippogriff in delicious in dungeon, always eating things and cooking stuff up in the dungeon. And you know, they go on about how you sauté it with mushrooms and add the garlic, and then, you know, cut the flesh and do all that kind of stuff. It's educational.

ZR One of my favourite examples is cells at work, because cells at work is actually used in Japan to teach people. Like aspiring doctors, biology and the human body. Wow. And they actually now use it because it's so accurately represents all of the functions of cells within the human body. So I always recommend that to

high school kids if they wanna, if they're doing biology and stuff because it actually makes it really fun to learn about cells and how they interact with pathogens and things.

MB That that's comics at its best. Well, if you think about it like we I'm gathering most of us in this room are here for comics, for enjoyment and entertainment. But comics can do so much that's you know.

Japanese, you know, obviously manga and American comics. There's so many publishers now, smaller publishers or book publishers that are doing really deeply educational work. I read one on quantum physics that was actually kind of understand. And I can't remember the name of this book. It was a big hardcover book, beautifully presented hard cover picked it up from Wollongong Library.

But I was like, wow, this book's amazing. It blew my mind, and I literally blew my mind because I was like, I didn't. I lost the ability to speak after reading that. It's weird, but yeah, there's so many things, you know, from an educational point of view. It's untapped. You know, that's what I'm trying to say. I think people, educational people, like whoever's in charge of trying to help kids learn more.

Governments, I guess whatever they should tap into this and look at the great examples from publishers all around the world and look, look what we can do to help the, you know, younger people or anyone to learn more in an engaging way.

KB That marriage of words and pictures, there's something magic about it, and it just helps people to learn much better, doesn't it

MB That's exactly the word. It's magic.

ML Because they released those. Was it Shakespeare? For starters, as a comic form? And then? Yeah. Graphic novels. Yeah. Yeah. Among the forms. So they're starting to, like you said, it's not just here, go read Macbeth.

MB That Japanese Macbeth actually looks really good, cause I've seen some comic Macbeth and they're awful, so badly done. How could you do that to Shakespeare? I'm not even that big a fan, but I get the importance of it.

KB I read this really cool book which I can't remember the title of it. Authors name was Tyler something. Anyway, it was part autobiography, so he talked about growing up in the 80s and being diagnosed with ADHD, but it's interspersed with all this information about ADHD, which you think would be kind of hard to explain in comic form, but he does it really well.

It's both informative, but then you can see how the condition is being played out in someone's real life as a child.

And towards the end of the book it finishes roughly when he finishes high school. And there's some hint that he would talk about what it's like as an adult. And I really hope that he one day writes that book because I feel like, you know, there's so many adults these days being diagnosed at this late stage with ADHD and it's very challenging for them. That would be really, really cool.

MB Yeah, so what about you, Karen? What book are you reading or what are you into?

40 Mins

KB Goodness, yeah, it was haiku for a very long time. I'm really enjoying there's this middle grade series that starts. Ohh gosh, they all have one word titles. It's like Clash and Camp and break and it's I can't remember her name Kayla or somebody. Anyway, I'm really enjoying that series I haven't quite read them all yet, but they're very well written. They're about friendship. All of them centre around this girl named Olive, who is a gregarious person. So she doesn't have like you know, a couple of close friends. She's kind of friends with everybody in her grade. And each book sort of deals with a different challenge that she's facing, usually to do with friendship. For example, Clash, which is my favourite one in the series, this new girl starts at their middle school and everybody's like, oh, you should be nice to her. You should be kind to her because she's new and she's settling in and she's just starting to make friends.

But they do not get along at all, and in fact, the new girl does something which is not very nice to Olive, and I just thought it dealt with that sort of very tricky situation, really well and really sensitively because, you know, as adults we can sort of default saying you need to be more understanding and but forgetting it goes both ways, if you know what I mean. Yeah so I really like that series.

ML Yeah. Can I just jump? You said Garth Nicks before.

KB Yeah. Yeah

ML Read his book, Sabriel.

KB Yes, I like Sabriel.

ML That's one of the series. Was it the Lost Kingdom or something. That series is great. That's one of my favourite books to try and read every once a year.

KB I'm enjoying his new ones about the left handed booksellers. Is it set in the 70s or 80s? I can't remember. Where it's almost like there's this sort of association of booksellers who can kind of do sort of magical type things and stuff. Weird stuff going on in London...

ML I haven't read yet. I haven't read those ones.

MB Is that an actual book with? With words and no pictures.

ML There's a picture on the cover.

MB That's amazing.

ML But yeah, it's. Sabriel, it's about necromancy. The Necromancer. Her dad's a necromancer and she has to then step in, so it's kind of like a veil. There's a veil

between our world and this lost Kingdom, and they can travel in between the two, and the setting for Sabriel was kind of what? Pre World War, maybe post World War One or something. I'm guessing something like that. So you've got this mix of that kind of era and a bit of fantasy mediaeval, but it's very well, well written and the characters are really cool. There's a magic cat in.

KB Love the cat.

MB You had me at magic cat. Can I just mention I read I'm reading something that's nearly. I think it's nearly finished. It's a manga series called Asadora. I don't know if you've heard of it. It's only about 8 books long so far, and I think it's gonna finish on book 10. It's absolutely brilliant. It's new. I told you about it Matt. It's set in the 60s in Japan. The artwork is phenomenal. I'm embarrassed. I can't think of the creator's name. He's the same guy that drew 20th century, 20th century boys. Yeah, I can't think. I can't remember his name. But anyway he anyway this series, it certainly 60s is about this little girl that grows up in this fishing village and there's this sudden storm that hits the village and it flattens the village and she catches a glimpse of what she thinks may or may not be a giant Kaiju out in the ocean. And this storm was horrendous, like it flattens the entire village and then she makes friends with this weird drunk guy who you think? Who is this guy? And they end up having this father, daughter, relationship and they so at this stage I think the little girl's 10 or something and it's about her growing up in the 60s in Japan and then she learns how to fly a plane cause he teaches her how to fly a plane and then she kind of rescues the Olympics that are about to happen in Japan. And then there's a Kaiju and this thing's got everything but it is...again, the characterization is brilliant. It's such a good read. And the little nuances with her and her siblings that happen, relationships between her and her siblings and her friends at school. Eventually she goes to school but she flies this little light plane and stuff and she works secretly for the Japanese government. I think by accident I can't remember exactly, but it's a really good read if you're a Manga fan.

Even if you're not into Manga, I'm not a huge Manga fan, but this book is just. It's beautiful, like, beautifully drawn, beautifully told. It is really, really good. Yeah, I recommend it. Asadora it's called very good.

KB I read this book. It's not new, it's called Himawari, which is Japanese for sunflower I think, and it's a story about this American girl who's got Japanese heritage but goes to Japan to live for about a year and just staying with these other housemates with students so it sort of explores each of their lives.

45 mins

But they're really interesting thing about it is it's multilingual. So in the lettering she has Japanese, Korean, and English, and there's this wonderful scene where they go out to dinner. There's three girls, and I think two other guys who are somewhere, how associated and you can see them having conversations, but in different languages but you can see who can't understand who, and the frustration of that, and it's just really, really, really cool visual representation of

what it's like to be in that situation, and because it's comics, it's just all laid out there in like 1 panel, but it captures it so well it's so cool.

ZR There's definitely some amazing things that you can do with imagery to tell stories differently. I did just want to quickly talk about Comic Book Day at the library. Because all of you have been supporting our comic book day celebrations for quite some time, and we are unable to host it this year.

ML Boo.

ZR And I was just wondering if you had any good stories from past experiences at Comic Book Day, and what effect do you think it might have on the community of Campbelltown?

ML That's deep Zoe.

ZR I'm sorry.

ML One of the things I always love about free comic book day with Campbelltown is seeing all the kids faces and you know, especially when they're cosplaying and running around the library and getting their free comics. And but I think I like the interactivity between the parents and their children. And you know, like you can see. You know, like there's a dad who's into Star Wars and he's, you know, obviously gotten his daughter into it. And they're kind of. So they're sharing that moment together. And I think that's really wonderful. And it's nice cause I've been doing free comic book day with Campbelltown for, I don't know how long and it's been nice to see it constantly grow and, you know, more attendees different faces, bigger family groups and things like that and you know the event watching the event change and evolve has been really exciting for me. Yeah, I do miss the seeing the quidditch guys though running around. Yeah, yeah.

MB I feel the same way. I think seeing families. It's for me. It's weird. Because when I was growing up, no one dressed in cosplay, and I mean, I secretly, I probably wanted to dress in cosplay when I was growing up, but it would have been deemed so uncool back when I was young and into it, and now I just, I love that it's so embraced by different generations and like Matt said when you see a family all dressed up. And cause Matt and I also we teach like drawing workshops at the free Comic Book day show. And yeah, that's a lot of fun too, cause then they come to the workshops as well. And I I like when we teach workshops and the kids obviously it's always great teaching kids to draw things or teaching them concepts, but often they'll come with their parents. And I say to their parents, you know, you can join in and that's fun too, because then they all they draw together and it just becomes like it's not a class anymore. Everyone's just having fun. And that's the whole point. You wanted to get to the point where people are just drawing and then just enjoying themselves. So that's great.

ML And yeah, I think like you said, the important thing is I think as a lot of adults, you're out there..A lot of you, you know, for whatever reasons, we stopped drawing. And so it's always nice when you give yourself that time to actually join in and do some drawing, not just for the kids, but for yourself. And I like to see it when you can see

that joy come back on their face from after the lesson. You know, they go, oh, well, I've drawn this again. I didn't draw since I was like 20 or 15. So for me, that's always a beautiful thing to see from the workshop and at the free Comic Book Day. Having that kind of interaction.

MB Yeah, that that's really important because I've I've done some work with drawing in adults to help their mental health, and it really does. And what Matt said is true. Like, I've had people that the free comic book day, like adults, come up to me, go. I haven't drawn for such a long time and I can't believe I drew this. And it's like, you know, you just gotta do it for yourself and enjoy it. Not worry about the outcome and try to enjoy the process which is easier to say when you're an artist. You're always like stressing out about.

Stupid things I can't draw anymore. Well, don't worry. Like people feel like that when they're younger, you get you have days where you're at the drawing board and you just can't draw today when really you just gotta loosen up and eat a banana and go for a walk and then come back. Or actually, watermelon apparently watermelon is a nature's antidepressant. Just thought I'd let you now that you know that watermelon

ML I thought bananas worked aswell.

MB Well, well, apparently watermelons are even better. You better Google it, but either way, it's gonna be good for you anyway.

50 Mins

KB I'm looking forward to seeing this generation grow up and make their own comics. I think that would be really, really cool. I was encouraging my daughter, like my daughter has grown up with comics in the house obviously from birth. That kind of thing. And then she started drawing her own. But then I started collecting them together in volumes like every year, when she was in primary school and they kept getting thicker and thicker and thicker, which is really, really cool. Yeah. And just being able to tell your own stories through the words and pictures it's just so much fun looking forward to that, I think, yeah, free comic book day. I just really love seeing the community coming together in that celebration of comics and just all the different things that happen on the day just works together really well. And because I know this sounds a bit crass

But because it's at the library nobody is pressuring anybody to like spend money or anything like that. And that's really rare. I feel like in the society where just being able to go somewhere and to enjoy books, reading comics in a place and not feeling pressured, that you need to spend money or whatever, but that you can just come and enjoy and discover new things as well. Like I feel like from year to year, more people are being yeah, initially it's like ohh I don't want to go to the tables and see what's on them. But now there's more curiosity. The more the free Comic Book Day has gone on, like people are actually picking up books

off our tables and flipping through them and going ohh wow, look at this. Like, yeah. And just getting that sort of curiosity and interest is really, really cool.

MB And the definition too, of comics is so, so broad now too, which is great. You talk about genre and like there's no end to it, which is, which is brilliant, you know, because when I was growing up, it was mostly superheroes. OK and there was maybe some horror comics which was pretty cool and things like that, but it took a while for like all these different genres to really pop up and bubble to the surface and really and a lot of them become super popular and become household names. And if you think about like independent comic books I think about Ninja, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles for example, like they were just done by two guys, they weren't a company. They were just two blokes doing it on their own and that's like the great hope because you think, you know, they just became a huge corporation, but they were just two friends. You know, freelancers didn't work on their own with next to no money trying to get this thing together. And it just hit big. It was a big idea. So that stuff like that gives me hope too, because you hope that and that's happened with other things too. You think even Harry Potter, even though it's not comics. Yeah. Harry Potter. Like, she struggled for years to try and get that going. And you gotta believe in yourself and you've got to really push. Do it the way you want to do it. You know whether it's a collaboration or or you were here on your own. Yeah, that kind of stuff. Really. It's inspiring. You gotta stay. That's the thing. You gotta stay inspired no matter what you're into you gotta stay inspired. What sort of comics? Follow your dream.

KB Going to free Comic Book Day events as well, I think, helps with that inspiration that they created.

MB Yeah, absolutely. And you get to socialise and you meet people. Cause I've met people at shows that I've become friends with for years. And Matt Lin and I we lost touch because we actually studied graphic design together and we came from two totally different worlds like two totally different planets and we met and I remember he was in a different class but we used to chat sometimes and then we lost touch over the years and we met at a comic book show and I was so shocked to see him. I thought I can't believe you're drawing stuff. And he said the same thing about me. I can't believe you're drawing stuff and it was cool. So we got to catch up and meet. And we hadn't seen each other for a long time.

ML Yeah. And now we're kind of friends.

MB Now, now we can't get rid of each other. It's wonderful.

ZR Thank you all for coming today and sharing your insight on the industry, your experiences and telling some wonderful stories. So really appreciate that

MB Lori, thanks for having us.

ZR And I hope we get to enjoy many more comic book days together.

ML Yeah, yeah.

KB Yeah, me too.

MB And go to your local library. There's so many comic books at libraries like I can't...

ZR Yeah, yeah. And they're all free.

MB I know I tell people all the time and they I can't believe they're shocked. I can't believe they're shocked when I say I go ohh. I can't afford comics. Well, go to the library and they've got all these cool books.

KB And if they don't have something it's always worth asking to see if they could get it in, because if enough people ask, yeah.

MB Yeah, a lot of a lot of times they will, like I've actually asked and I was shocked. I didn't know you could ask for a book and they would order a book. I remember asking one of the first times I said I'd really like to get this series.

MB They ordered it and I I got to borrow it like 2 weeks later. I was like, wow.

ML Also, too, if you borrow a comic and you're after book 4 ask because it's probably at another branch.

ZR Or we can buy it. I love buying new books.

MB Ohh and yeah. The other services that people don't know about is that you can book the stuff online, so you can literally book stuff that you look for. You go to the library website, everyone's computer savvy, your kids are, I know you are, and you get on there and you just, you know, click, click, click.

55 Mins

MB All the books you want to get, and then when they're in, they send you an email and you go pick them up. It's like, how much easier is that? Go to your library. It's awesome.

ZR Do you have any socials or any apps tags that you'd like to share for yourselves? Where can people find you? I should say.

ML My Instagram is Matthew Linn hyphen art. So Mathew Lin HYPHEN art

MB I'm on Instagram. I'm Marcelo draws on Instagram. I also have, I think I have something on Facebook, Marcello draws workshops, I think just go to my Instagram it's easier. Marcelo drawers one L Marcelo draws.

KB Yeah, you can find my socials on my website which is hive-mindedness.com and I'm blue Sky Instagram Facebook used to be on X not so much anymore.

ZR Cool. All right. Thank you.