

TELLING THE STORY OF RALLY DRIVER MICHELE MOUTON'S CAREER IN THE FORM OF A COMIC MEDIA

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Abstract

Although Rallying is one of the most recognizable motorsport in the world, its popularity has been in a decline since 1997, including Indonesia. Citizens nowadays pay more attention to sports that are advertised more in entertainment media. The lack of attention and awareness towards the challenges and excitement of rallying makes it a niche motorsport. To expand the market for rallying media, a rallying-themed comic that tells the story of Michèle Mouton, Group B racer, will be made. The book explores Michèle's career in rallying, as well as the excitement and issues she faced. The book will help readers understand factors that relates to things Michèle had faced, based on a storyline that is easy to digest, fun to read and educative. It is hoped that a rallying-themed comic book can introduce readers to the motorsport and help understand rally racers' skills and challenges in championships they participate in.

Keywords: Motorsport, Rally, Story, Comic

I. INTRODUCTION

Rallying is a motorsport that has seen popularity in the 1980s and the 2000s. Although the sport is still considered popular in modern times, the lack of coverage from notable medias, rising cost of competition and the lack of excitement [1], [2] has made it difficult for viewers to maintain interest of the motorsport, despite attempts from the FIA to attract attention from viewers, manufacturers and racing teams.

The 'man versus nature' challenge is what attracts people to Rallying, as drivers are tasked to drive through designated stages as fast as possible, and said stages are rarely lapped or have poor road condition. Although drivers are provided with vehicles that are optimized to go fast over said stages, the vehicles aren't perfect and requires drives to concentrate to the road, the car

and the directions their co-drivers point towards.

One form of media that can be used to attract attention towards Rallying is a comic book, which is a series of panels with drawings and texts that form a cohesive story [3]. Comics are considered as versatile, as not only that the story structure and art direction of a comic is up to the creator's interpretation, it also visualizes key moments that written media cannot convey well enough.

Michèle Mouton's career will be used to highlight the strength of using comics to bring attention to motorsport. Her career, as well as her background and motivation makes for an interesting story to convey. Michèle has a humble background, being that she grows up in an average environment and had built a portfolio of wins and podiums in local rallies legitimately. Despite being a woman in a sporting environment dominated by men, Michèle was able to stand out among the competition through a combination of her adaptability towards various cars, encouragement from her father, and training from team members.

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A. Creation Process of a Comic

There are many steps required to create a comic, which results in creators taking more than two months to create and distribute comics. Creating a comic involves writing and converting a story to storyboards, designing characters and assets, sketching panels, and finishing with lineart, coloring, and rendering. Writing and designing are crucial as they set a first impression for first-time readers and creators for what's to come.

Creating a comic is a matter of the creator's ability of balancing Art Direction and Storytelling simultaneously, as they complement each other to form an entertaining medium. Creators are encouraged to set up and allocate comic panels accordingly to form a cohesive storyline, and although creators often focus on the storytelling aspect, a good art direction helps readers comprehend the information being fed by the creator without exhausting too many words.

Art Direction

Art Direction involves the creator's choice of style used for a comic. Emphasis, color combination, and composition are elements that are found in certain art directions of a media. Understanding factors such as the target demographic, the written story, and the type of media used for the comic will play a part in how it is going to be drawn, as well as how well the story will translate to a series of drawings.

Storytelling

Storytelling is integral to the creation of a comic, as a well-written story complements its art direction and make up for shortcomings. Comics can be used as a medium to effortlessly express a situation without excessive use of texts, meaning that taking advantage of the medium can result in a comic that is easy, exciting and thoughtful to read. Clear indications of a story's introduction, buildup, climax and resolution can help achieve the goals set up.

B. Exploration in Comic

Creators can be inspired from many things, including the simple act of eating and real-life phenomenon. However, converting inspirations into a coherent storyline will require a new approach, depending on the media used for the story. To

convert inspirations into a coherent storyline, exploration will be used to help expand on its possibilities. Exploration is an act of understanding a subject matter through compilations of as many data, observation, trial and evaluation [4] as possible. The type of exploration and the result of research for subjects can be adjusted accordingly, depending on what the subject is going to be used for.

As comics often include a coherent storyline, comics can be used to explore and visualize subject matters in an engaging, digestible and easy to understand manner. Explored subjects are able to be arranged in a way that displays the context, process and end result of the subject, as well as the message behind it. Comics also help readers comprehend information provided by explored subjects, as comics often rely on visuals to convey a structure, resulting in an easier reading comprehension.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Creating a comic based on real-life phenomenon will require concrete data and sources to ensure an accurate and exciting sequences of events. In order to gather the data required for analysis, a qualitative data collection method would be used, where information from various sources will be compared and summarized into a digestible format. This method will be applied to information regarding Michèle Mouton's career, Group B and additional comic creation techniques.

However, summarized information are not fully convertible into another medium, as creators require an issue, goal, and vision to create a comic from existing subjects. A method that can be used to address the issue is a Practice-Based Research analysis, where researchers would use existing sample to find the crux of the issue and repurpose it to create a new object that can solve said issue [5]. The method of analysis in Practice-Based Research complements the method of practice by building upon the strengths and weaknesses of the samples chosen. By using Practice-Based Research, creators are able to find core elements of the summarized information and build upon a core to create a new object that can solve the underlying issues found in the analyzed subject.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Story Analysis

Michèle Mouton, a French villager from Grasse, started her career in 1973 Monte Carlo Rally as a co-driver for Jean Talbi [6]. After discussing with her father, she agreed to drive in a local rally event with the help of his father's funding. Michèle managed to win in her designated class and has since built a portfolio of wins and podium finishes from 1975 to 1980. Michèle was eventually invited to drive for the Audi Factory Team in 1981 World Rally Championship. Even though Michèle's initial impression was rough, she surprised everyone by winning the 1981 Rallye San Remo, followed by her streak of wins in 1982 WRC where Michèle managed to score enough points to contend for the World Champion title, being behind Walter Röhrl by a few points before the penultimate Ivory Coast round of 1982 WRC.

Unfortunately, the news of her father's passing at the dawn of the first Ivory Coast round changed Michèle's life. Encouraged by her mother to honor Michèle's father, she continued competing despite her original intent to return to France. Michèle surprised everyone once again by building a 60 minutes lead from her main rival [6], [7], but unfortunately, a transmission failure during a service and various accidents in the final day of the rally forced Michèle to retire and give up the battle for the title. Michèle did not dwindle on her loss, though, as she believed that her father's death changed her life for better or for worse.

Since then, Michèle gradually decreases her involvement in motorsport. After dominating the 1976 German Rally Championship in a Peugeot, Michèle retired from full-time rallying. She would then help form the Race of Champions in honor of Henri Toivonen's passing [8], competed in 1988 Rally of Tunisia, came second in 2000 London-Sydney Marathon and 2010 Rallye du Maroc [9], and participated in 2008 Otago Classic Rally of New Zealand. Michèle would eventually be hired by the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile to be the head commission of Women in Motorsport in 2010, and then the manager of WRC a year later [10].

B. Comic Format

Michèle Mouton's career take place in the 1970s to the 1980s where competition between drivers and manufacturers were at its highest [11], meaning that emulating the comics of the 1980s would help emphasize the era of her career and strengthen the readers immersion. The comic will mimic the Japanese black-and-white manga that was popularized in the 19th century [12], use every-day standard language, and would be split into three chapters where each chapter tells the various stages of Michèle's career.

C. Concept Stage

Characters

Characters in this comic are designed to resemble real-life people with modifications to strengthen their expression during key moments. Notable attributes such as hair, nose, eye and facial structure of the referenced character would be applied to the design of the character, and their facial expressions are drawn proportional, but exaggerated enough to make their emotion more pronounced. The body of the characters are also simplified, but retains their human proportion in order to sell the idea of a living person in the 1980s.



Figure 1 Concept art of Michèle Mouton

Brands

Assets associated with real-life brands are spoofed by studying recognizable elements of the chosen brands, researching subjects related to

the elements, and adapting the results into a new, standalone brand. Spoofed brands help creators avoid potential copyright issues, as well as further complement the base characteristics of subjects associated with the brands. Different brands require different approaches of spoofing. Some brands are associated with a family name, and others take their name from an animal, a plant or a word from a dictionary.



Figure 2 Concept art of various spoofed brands and sponsors

D. Comic Design

Storyboard

The design process is intertwined with the storyboard process, which helps the creator decide how many characters and assets are needed for the comic's storyline, as well as obtain first impressions of how the story will play.

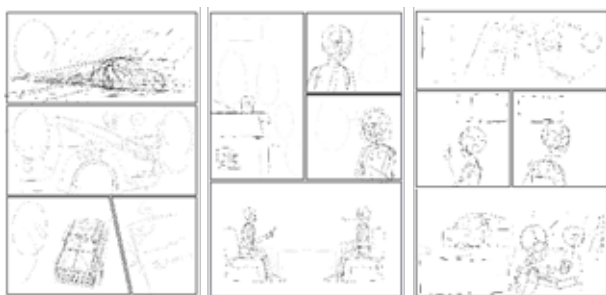


Figure 3 Storyboard of Comic

Storyboard translates the written story into a series of rough sketches in panels. These are arranged based in a reading order, and because the comic is planned to be read from left to right, the creator designed so that contents and speech bubbles in the panel begins on the top left and ends on the bottom right, which continues until the end of a chapter.

Sketch

After finishing the storyboard and design of the characters and assets, the creator proceeds to the sketching stage where storyboards are modified and enhanced with previously made assets. The creator would also experiment with new composition and angles to deliver the main point of several panels better. Printing guidelines such as margin, gutter, bleed and safe area are also accounted during this step.

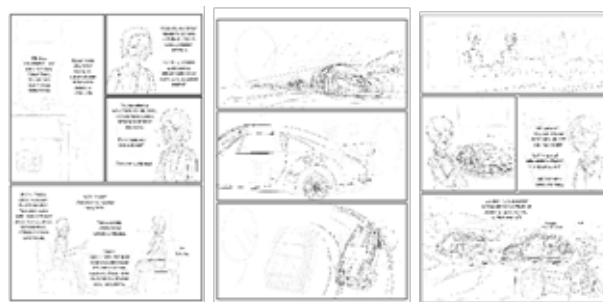


Figure 4 Sketches of Comic

Line-art and Coloring

In this step, finished sketches would evolve into line-arts, where the creator further defines the sketches with stronger and more pronounced lines that forms a series of subjects and objects. Additional effects such as focus lines, speed lines, and effect texts are added to better emphasize the scenarios that occur in the storyline.

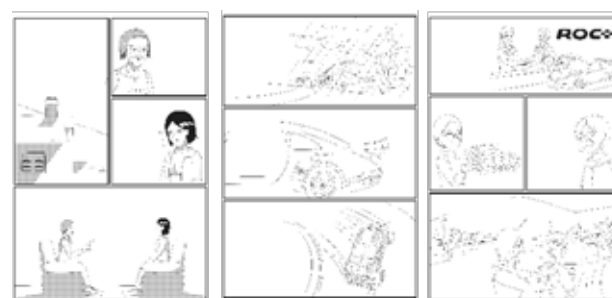


Figure 5 Line-arts of Comic

Finishing touches such as screen-tone, speech bubble and blocking are applied after every pages of line-arts has been finished. Speech bubbles are also applied and adjusted according to the size and prominence of the assets drawn in the panels.



Figure 6 Final Artwork of Comic

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives and the results obtained in this study, it can be concluded as follows:

1. A comic based on a real-life figure makes for an interesting read without using many words to express the situations faced.
2. Rally-themed comic can attract the attention of rally fans, as well as spread awareness of the existence of key figures portrayed in the comic.
3. Creating a comic requires the creator to be prepared for many tasks simultaneously. Proper planning and adequate allocation of resources makes for a well-done comic.
4. Compromises such as accuracy to source material and speculations are necessities to ensure the story is exciting to read, but too many compromises will affect the reading experience.

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