

KS: *Flight* is an annual anthology of short stories by artists sharing similar sensibilities. The sixth edition is being released this summer. Some of the past contributors have included Jeff Smith, Michel Gagné (who has done animation for films like *The Iron Giant* and *Ratatouille*) and Phil Craven (story artist on *Kung Fu Panda*). There are quite a few artists who got their feet wet with comics for the very first time, doing stories for *Flight*. It's a great venue for many artists that the general public might not know about.

MM: Do you feel there are any problems in the publishing of graphic novels? What are your obstacles as a cartoonist?

KS: I think a lot of cartoonists find it hard to sustain the energy needed to complete a graphic novel – it took me about 16 months to finish this second *Jellaby* book, and that was a very difficult experience.

I think lots of publishers are pushing out manga and graphic novels at an accelerated pace because there's a growing demand for them, but you might be seeing some of the quality suffering as a result. There's still a lot of work to be done to get publishers to really understand and embrace this format. There are lots of niche genres that manga cover that North America will take a long time to adopt.

MM: Like what?

KS: Things like *Iron Wok Jan*.

MM: Is that because it's too risqué?

KS: No, it's more about broadening the genres within the medium. There are a lot of people who still think of comics and graphic novels as a genre, when they should realize it's just a format. *Iron Wok Jan* is a great example of how diverse manga actually are in Japan – here you have a comic about competitive cooking! North

American comics are still very superhero-driven. I'm hoping we can shift away from that soon.

MM: How do you think comics have changed? What do you think about Photoshop?

KS: Photoshop is a godsend! I've been using it for seven or eight years now and I'm still learning new ways to do things. It gives me more freedom, but at the same time I think I also react against that, because I worry about making my art to look too processed.

MM: What do you do about that?

KS: Just little things, like drawing panel borders and word balloons freehand so the art is a little more personal and less mechanical.

MM: How do you feel about the traditional method?

KS: I think the traditional mediums will never go away. Comics done with watercolours are absolutely gorgeous. The computer is never going to replace the traditional media.

MM: Any predictions for the future of comics?

KS: There were hardly any comics in school libraries when I was growing up. Now I see boys and girls reading manga all the time. I'm looking forward to seeing what some of them will do, comics-wise, in the next 10 years. This generation is going to grow up much more "comics literate." I think they're going to understand and wield the language better than we ever will.

MM: And think of how much easier it will be for that generation of librarians to choose manga or graphic novels for their students!

KS: Yeah, it's heady stuff. It's a really exciting time for comics. ■

