

KZMASTER PRESENTS:

CREATING A HERO!

-MY
INSPIRATIONS


-COLOR THEORY
AND CONCEPTS

-HOW CHARACTER
LOOK EFFECTS STORY

MY CALCULATED PROCESS
BEHIND CREATING THE
FACE THAT RUNS THE
PLACE.

*FEAT KYUS DORASHAW

KEY QUESTION



HOW CAN I CREATE A CHARACTER I CAN BUILD A BRAND AROUND?

As a **writer and graphic novel artist** I often wonder what it takes to create a character people will love.

Growing up in **late 90's and 00's** I spent a lot of time around console video games, American cartoons, and Japanese Animation. I would always dream of one day **having my own show** so that I could grow a fanbase and entertain.

Fast forward some years and I'm graduating Art School with the ultimate goal still in mind but, **given how the animation industry has changed in America since the early 2000's**, having my own show is more metaphorical at this point. **I want to be able to get paid to tell the story that I want to tell**, which would be as if readers/fans were tuning in to watch a show, my show, with every release.

CREATING A FRANCHISE



With this in mind I Ask myself what it takes to create a franchise centerpiece, the face or most popular aspect of the product.

A brand needs a Franchise centerpiece in order to grow. People who didn't watch basketball know who Michael Jordan is, people who don't watch Japanese animation have at least heard of and recognize Naruto.



If I've learned anything from my My time at MCAD it's that recognition is everything to when it comes to selling a product.

So, following the footsteps of the brands before me, I aim to set out and create my own.



CREATING A CHARACTER

Meet **Kyus Dillashaw**, the main protagonist of “Eldaria”, a coming-of-age action-adventure comedy geared towards teenagers and young adults. The name Kyus means ‘Peace’ and his last name comes from UFC fighter T.J Dillashaw.

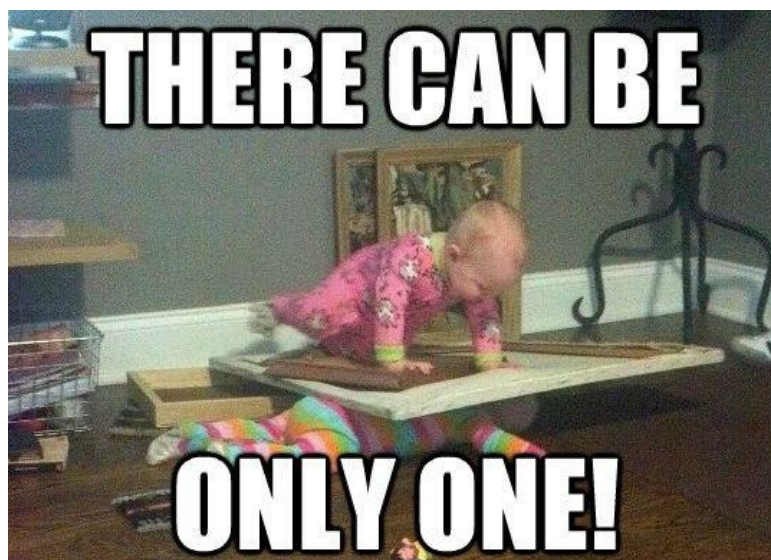


The story goes that, after being **mortally wounded during a mysterious encounter**, Kyus is sucked into the world of Eldaria and is transformed into its guardian.

Obviously there’s **much** more to the story than that but it would take a paper in itself to explain.



The purpose of this character was to **bridge reality with fantasy and fill the viewer/player/readers desire for a ‘relatable’ hero**. In order to do that I needed to make his signature form ‘one of a kind’, meaning that, within the story, **no other character is like him** (unless it’s a special occasion).



CREATING THEE GUY

“Dress like you’re part of the crowd, and one day you’ll be just a face in it.”



The original concept for the main character came back in **November of 2011**. The Crux species were original creature designs that emerged and gained popularity in the furry fandom many years before.

This design was perfect. It was unique enough to be iconic and heroic enough to create a likeable protagonist, but copyright issues prevent me from owning the rights to sell **anything with the Crux design on it** so I ended up having to scrap it.

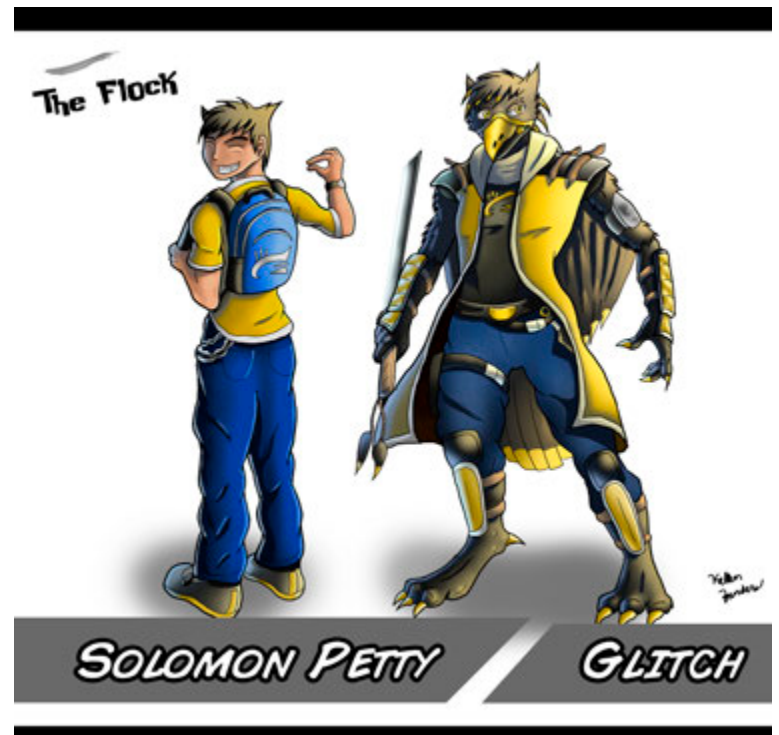
CREATING THEE GUY



The next concept for Kyus came in **December 2014** when I went with an avian approach to the creature design.

Drawing inspiration from characters like **General Greivous**(His OP Clone Wars version), **Falco Lombardi**, and **Sasuke Uchiha**, I wanted to create a unique fighting character. It worked for the most part.

The development lasted **2 years** and I managed to world build around Kyus's species to really flesh out the universe. Unfortunately, it became clear that **the avian design matched up more thematically in a different story**, and couldn't used here. [There can be only one!]



CREATING THEE GUY



Another concept for a main character came in 2012 with the creation of HeaLeo, my DC Universe Online main.



DC Universe HeaLeo

Originally HeaLeo was to be pitched to DC as a possible new character series, but, after learning more about the comic industry, it was clear he was better off flying solo on the indie scene of comics.

**IMAGE(BOTTOM LEFT) FROM DCUO DATABASE*

LIFE HACKS

After landing upon a character concept that was capable of carrying a story I had to sit down and write down the list of goals I wanted to accomplish. **Many times while storyboarding**, in an attempt to get the character more 'over' with the viewer, I lost sight of my original intent- to create a franchise hero.

Objective

- 1) CREATE A LIKEABLE MAIN PROTAGONIST GEARED TOWARDS **MILLENNIALS WHO ARE AROUND AMERICAN INTERNET CULTURE.**
- 2) CREATE A UNIQUE CHARACTER DESIGN FOR THE PROTAGONIST AS WELL A **LOGO, SIGNATURE CLOTHING, AND ICONIC GESTURE.** BRAND RECOGNITION IS KEY.
- 3) THE CHARACTER DESIGN MUST **RESONATE BOTH WITH THE READER AND THE FANTASY WORLD THAT THEY'RE APART OF;** THERE MUST BE SOMETHING 'FAMILIAR' YET 'NEW'.
- 4) THE CHARACTER DESIGN MUST MATCH UP THEMATICALLY WITH THE PLOT. **CREATING A GOOD STORY IS THE #1 PRIORITY.**

INSPIRATIONS

When it comes to developing and creating characters I reference WWE a lot. Despite all the mockery and parody the genre of pro wrestling receives (yes, we all know it's 'fake'), the unveiling of the inner workings of the industry has revealed that they're really masters of marketing.

WWE has been entertaining its audience for decades, so obviously they're doing something right when they can still sell out arenas and draw celebrities to events. With all that being said, I take the formula they use for their wrestlers (characters) and see how I can apply it to my own creations to better the story. It's all theater at the end of the day.

HERO THEORY!



Even if one doesn't watch Pro Wrestling one knows who John Cena is- the face of the pro wrestling genre in America. His merchandise far outsells the second best seller (AJ Styles as of writing this, who plays an arrogant villain, or what's called a heel).

Typically the story goes that the Face embodies all the 'good' desirable traits for the viewer- talented, good-looking, humble, respectful. This goes all the way back to the days of Golden and Silver-Age Superman, the story makes you want to cheer for the Face to succeed.



His character actually makes no sense whatsoever.

HERO THEORY!



A Face is only as good as its Heel, the 'bad' guy or **villain of the story**. These characters embody the 'bad' or negative traits for the viewer, and use their abilities to create obstacles for the Face. You're supposed to want to root **against** these characters.

Cena has had a plethora of Heels to defeat over the years and it's what's made him a **modern day Superman**.

HERO THEORY!

When writing, one has to keep a **balance** between the Hero and Villain win-loss ratio.



- If the Hero wins **too much**, the story becomes stale as the Villain becomes **less credible**.
- If the **Villain** wins too much, the audience can become annoyed or (worst case scenario) end up **turning on the Hero** for being weak.



As audiences grow older and more sophisticated, they demand a character that resonates more with them. While kids and women demographically prefer a **Superman**, teens and young adults prefer the **witty joke-cracking anti-hero**, the Rebel. (Fun Fact: There was a time when CM Punk outsold John Cena in merchandise.)

The anti-hero is a **'high-risk, high-reward'** character to write due to the fact that they can completely **turn the audience/viewer/player against the hero**. What I try to do is take elements from the anti-hero and incorporate them into the hero so that they have an edge to them. It's all to avoid the character becoming **stale and forgettable**.

YES! YES! YES!



Generally, the formula for crafting an entertaining storyline is the 'Everyman Underdog' or 'Loveable Loser'.

The Face, smaller and weaker than the Heel, has to use their natural ability and wit to overcome every obstacle the power-heavy Heel throws their way. (It's essentially someone overcoming his or her tormentor).

The more relatable the Face is to the viewer, the more they resonate, hence why they're called 'Everyman', because they represent the every day man. These characters are naturally charismatic and their underdog stature makes it easy to sympathize with them.

Tension and Conflict are what breed a story. The more the odds are stacked against the Hero, the more tension there is.

However this too can be done incredibly wrong...



"DO YOU KNOW THE DEFINITION OF INSANITY?"

*"THIS IS
MY YARD
NOW."*



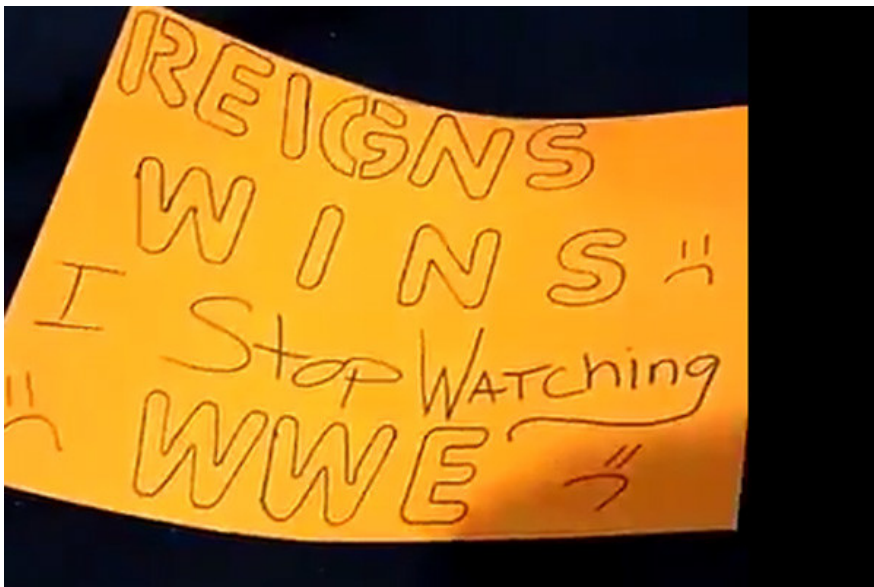
Meet Aquaman Roman Reigns, the worst character I have ever seen. Standing 6'4" 265 lbs, this character has no charisma, no personality, and no goals one can relate to.

His storylines are predictable, he defeats every single villain (despite the ridiculous amount of odds against him), and is given opportunity after opportunity to be successful.

Writers legitimately tried to write him as an honorable 'Everyman Underdog', but who relates to being the size of an NFL linebacker with a superhero combat vest? It's been 4 years and I legitimately don't know what this character wants or why.

I like to call this the 'Roman Reigns Effect' (RRE)- Pushing or advertising a character so much that it hurts the product, not helps.

There's no point in the main character if the audience resents them, I try to avoid this at all costs.



THE CREATION PROCESS

With all this in mind I set out to create a hero who'd **embody the traits of a likeable Face mixed with the viewer's desire for a bit of an anti-hero**. If I could nail down an interesting design, it'd be much easier to nail down a charming personality to go with it.

One thing about this story is that the **male and female share the heroic spotlight**. Too many times in the genre I've seen the plot solely be about the male overshadowing the female lead and, if I was going to create a face that runs the place, I needed the characters to shoulder the plot load and compliment each other's personality traits- **a chemistry**. (Plus double the merchandise.)

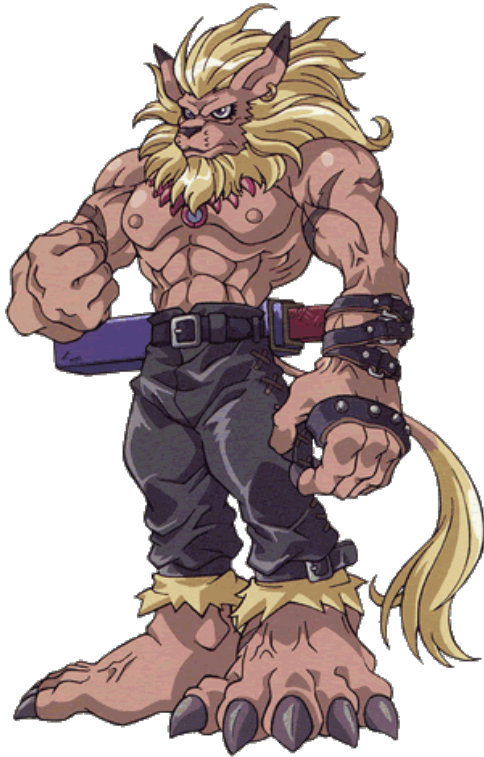
Design Process



Being of a fantasy world, it was clear the best role for Kyus would be a **'beastly'** design especially when his co-lead is a human female princess. (Like a sort of Beauty and The Beast).

A lion-beast design would promote the desirable traits of a Face; **brave, strong, and a sense of coolness'** because of its **uniqueness**- almost like a larger than life quality.

THE CREATION PROCESS



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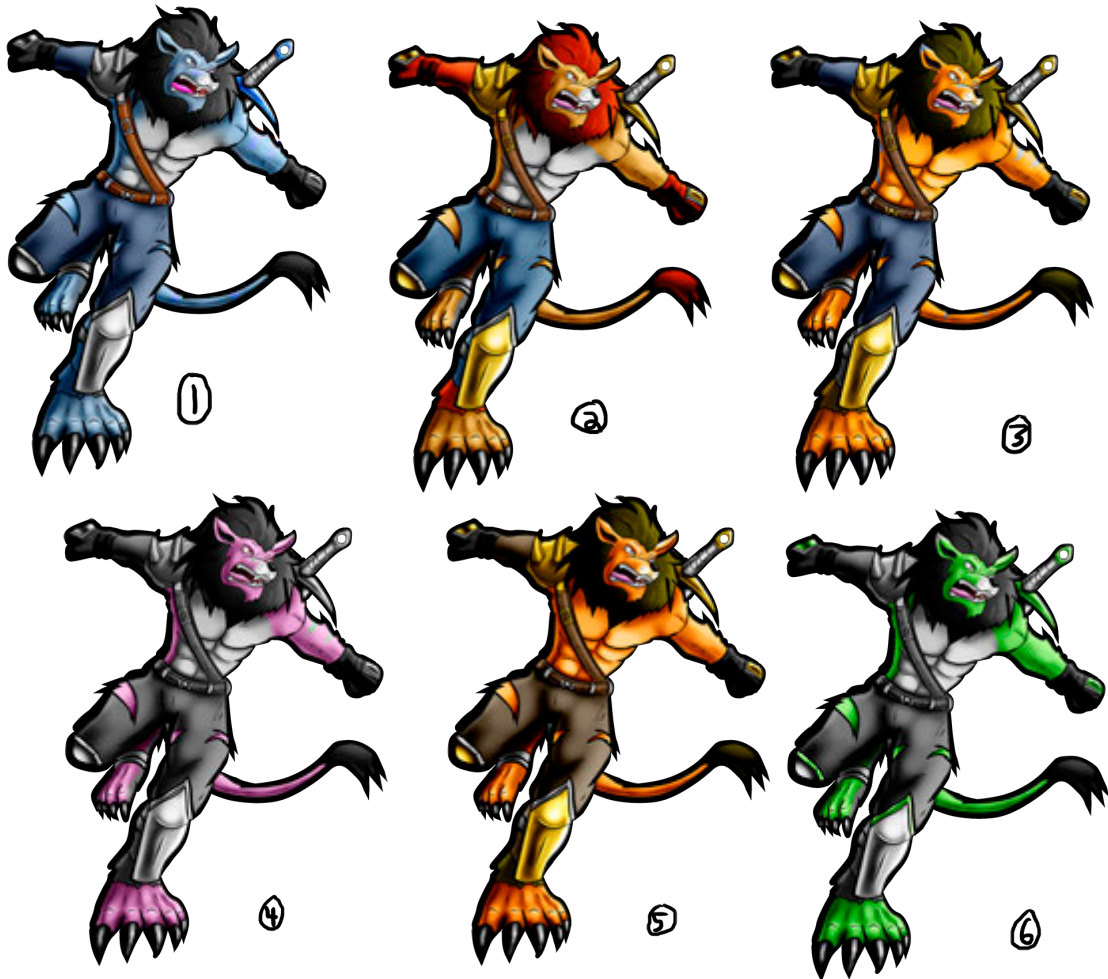


Drawing inspiration (no pun intended) from Digimon's Leomon and Weregarurumon, my **I wanted to create a hybrid of their designs**. In my mind, if 1 is cool, and 2 is cooler, then $1 + 2$ should equal 3 right?



I had to digitally airbrush in grayscale so that I could be able to experiment with his colors.

GEN 1



The first batch of designs came from the question, “What looks the most heroic?”. Which looked as if it shouted, ‘I’m the hero here to save the day.’ ? #2 is my first choice due to the fact that the color scheme would work very well with print and matched up with the landscape in the story.

#1 was the original blue concept that HeaLeo had in DCUO, however it didn’t translate as well as I would of hoped to digital illustration. I still felt that this hero design was a little....generic...and wanted to experiment more. I wanted something that popped out at the viewer.

GEN 2



He may be a poorly written character, but Roman Reigns does have a pretty cool attire, suitable for action movies. By mixing his design with Gado from the 'Bloody Roar' franchise, I hoped to create something of a badass.



While none of these designs particularly jump out at me, getting the blue design to work in design #3 gave me a spot of confidence that the color scheme could possibly be used for a sort of 'beserk' form for the character.

GEN 3



I still wasn't satisfied with the designs I'd come up with, so I dug deeper into the [professional wrestling](#) inspiration combined with influences from [Japanese Animation](#). Using [Incineroar from Pokemon](#) and [Naoto from Tiger Mask W](#), and [BanchoLeomon from Digimon](#). I wanted to create my own sort of iconic look.



GEN 3



I personally **loved** these. Put original logos on the coat and it'd be a signature look with **brand recognition**. I'm torn between designs #2 and #4.

GEN 4

Exploring further into the realm of WWE since the last batch worked well, I decided to experiment with [Seth Rollins 2015 outfit](#) as it embodied a look that could be both hero and villain. (He looks like an X-men).

I decided to give it a shot and see what would happen.



No, absolutely not. I don't like a single one of these designs and the last one resembles [Lion-O from Thundercats](#) too much to be of any use.

This would be good for a parody gag though.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Another concept I had for Kyus was to make him a dragon guy, because those are in, right? Getting inspiration from [Shiron from Legendz](#), I tried to anthropomorphize and come up with a cool design that'd be mixed with [BanchoLeomon's](#) (for lack of better word) *swagger*.



I think I'll save this design for [another character](#) in a story.



HONORABLE MENTIONS



While this isn't enough to be considered Kyus's **main character design**, I do like the coat enough it and **alternate outfit** (minus the shin guards).

SO MANY FACES!

These are some of the heads (or muzzles) I sketched out to try and play around with head accessories to see **what stuck and what didn't**. A lion's mane in itself could be considered a head accessory so it was difficult to **find items that added to the 'coolness' look and not take away from it**.



CONCLUSION



I've decided to nominate this model for Kyus's design. I love the color scheme, it shouts 'cocky hero' while fitting the cool 'beastly' theme.



Unless my co-writer vehemently disagrees with this, I feel as though it works. The next step would be to design his human form, come up with a logo, and a unique gesture or catchphrase.

We're now ready to flesh out the character as well to give him unique quirks.

CONCLUSION

Concept and Design is a lot like painting (in a lot of cases it **is** painting) ; the work is **never truly done**, you work on it for as long as you like and then call it a day **when you feel you can do no more**. (And then you get critiqued to oblivion.)

I'm satisfied with the solution I arrived at and achieved a much better result than if I had stuck with just the first design. **[Okay Anfield, you were right...]** I feel as though I can keep experimenting but, for now, this will work for our main character.

The next part of the process is **brand recognition** of course, but I also would have to design the look of the lead heroine to so that the looks compliment each other and **enhance the 'coolness' of both**.

As for the project itself, "Eldaria" is something I want to start production on early 2018 in the form of a Visual Novel (and possible comic series). If interested, e-mail kellenzanders@yahoo.com

Thank you very much for reading,
KZ

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