

# Manga Madness!

## TOKYOPOP

*- leading the way in U.S. Manga Revolution*

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## TOKYOPOP

- Profile -



**Stuart Levy – founder and CEO of TOKYOPOP**

**Nationality:** American  
**Industry:** Publishing, Film, etc.  
**Location:** Tokyo, L.A, London, Hamburg  
**Date Established:** 1996  
**Company Type:** privately-held  
**Staff:** 110 worldwide  
**Industry Size :** US\$300 million  
**e-mail:** [info@tokyopop.com](mailto:info@tokyopop.com)  
**URL:** [www.tokyopop.com](http://www.tokyopop.com)

TOKYOPOP is hailed as a leading youth-oriented entertainment brand and an innovator of manga creation.

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*It's big and it's getting bigger.*

*Manga is a growing global phenomenon and Stuart Levy, CEO of manga publisher TOKYOPOP, is leading the charge at the forefront of this expanding brand of Japanese subculture.*

*Business Writer Jonathon Walsh writes in this report about EA-Tokyo's February 2006 speaker...*

[Originally published in January 2005 issue of *Hiragana Times* ]

**One** of the many surprises that greet foreigners when they come to Japan is the sight of Japanese businessmen reading comics. Aren't comics for kids? *Not in Japan.*

*Manga*, the Japanese word for comics, represents a genre that is not only big in Japan, but quickly becoming a worldwide phenomenon.

If you think that is impressive, wait until you see the numbers. Manga is said to account for some one out of every three books sold in Japan, and in 2002, revenues from comic magazines and paperbacks topped 500 billion yen according to The Research Institute for Publications. Together, manga magazines and books accounted for over 22 percent of all publishing-industry sales.

The craze was originally fuelled by the hugely popular works of Japanese manga legend Osamu Tezuka, who created famous and beloved characters such as Astro Boy, Jungle Emperor Leo and Princess Knight, and was the artist behind the distinctive "large eyes" style of Japanese animation. Household names such as the magic talking cat Doraemon, Dragonball and Anpanman have subsequently led the way to a whole host of other comics and characters that jam book stands throughout Japan.

It was only a matter of time before the outside world started catching the manga bug.

PTO



## *Manga fastest growing segment in U.S. publishing industry*

Enter TOKYOPOP® Inc. CEO Stuart Levy. Founded in 1996, TOKYOPOP Inc. is the leading North American publisher of manga and at the forefront of the fastest growing segment in the publishing industry in the U.S. The company has millions of books in print and exclusive rights to hundreds of licensed and original books, videos and music products. TOKYOPOP publishes many hit manga series, including Love Hina, Chobits, Rave Master, Initial D, GTO, Battle Royale and Cowboy Bebop.

So how did the Los Angeles native enter an industry that is dominated by Japanese? “When I went to Japan early in my career, I fell in love with the culture and popular entertainment,” he says. “I really felt there was an opportunity to bring some of it back to the States and market it in a way that would position it alongside hip hop and street culture. So, in my mid-twenties, I took my entire savings and invested it into my new business. In the beginning, I was penniless but thankfully things worked out!”

The biggest hurdle in their growth phase, Levy says, was overextension. “In the beginning, we tried to do everything. We accepted a huge amount of projects, which reduced our ability to do any one thing well. We learned to slow down our pace and build TOKYOPOP one day at a time.”

While almost equal numbers of males and females follow manga in Japan, the market in America leans more towards the girls – 60% female/40% male, ranging in age from 13 to 24 years old. Why are there more female fans? “It is mostly due to the subject content of manga being released in America now,” Levy explains. “There has been more focus on titles devoted to dramatic stories about relationships and love. Additionally, the art really resonates with this generation of young people, teenagers and children. They have grown up playing video games and Japanese games have been some of the most popular.”

## *Finding hook that resonates with Japanese*

While many companies point to a high share price or top selling products as a sign of their success, Levy’s biggest highlight was actually very small, but very meaningful.

While walking through an airport he happened to see a teenage boy reading a book.

“I then noticed it was an English manga. My curiosity was peaked so I got a little closer and saw that it was a TOKYOPOP manga. That was the highlight of my career,” he says.

Reflecting the ongoing global growth of manga, TOKYOPOP’s business is booming.

“Business has doubled every year since we began,” Levy says. “I know that a “level-off” is inevitable, but our business continues to be strong. Our goal is to build a brand – TOKYOPOP – that is known worldwide as a provider of exciting and creative entertainment.”

What does Levy believe are the main keys to running a successful entrepreneurial venture in Japanese? “Finding what you could bring to the table that perhaps a Japanese person couldn’t,” he says. “Perhaps a need or a market demand that cannot or is not fulfilled by the Japanese. Like most countries, Japan is a pretty nationalistic place. If there is a choice, they will choose products from Japan. You have to find a hook that will work with the Japanese consumer.”



## **TOKYOPOP**

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