

Wau Animation Studio: The Mastermind Behind 'Ejen Ali The Movie's' RM 30 Million Box Office Haul

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Prologue

WAU Animation Studio, a relatively new company, shocked everyone in 2019 when their film "Ejen Ali The Movie" made RM30 million in profit. WAU Animation Studio was established on March 18, 2013 by Usamah Zaid Yasin, who is also the company's Chief Executive Officer. Prior to the release of Ejen Ali The Movie, the animation studio created an animated series with the same title, which aired on Malaysian television channel TV3. A group of creative talents in the animation company has successfully generated quality content to the point of winning numerous awards for the animated series and film category of choice, thanks to their seven-year experience. Their tenacity and perseverance in this industry has paid off, as every production aired on tv has been well received by audiences of all races and ages.



Muhammad Usamah Zaid Yasin is a successful Malaysian animator who was born on December 19, 1983. During his time with the company Les' Copaque, he was one of the most influential figures in the development of the animated series Upin & Ipin. Then, in 2013, he resigned from Les' Copaque and founded WAU Animation Studios. The Multimedia University (MMU) graduate's seven-year experience with Les' Copaque Production has given him the motivation and excitement to form a company with several other key individuals to develop the Malaysian animation industry. The dedication he shows must have held some secrets since the new company was able to produce animated films on par with foreign animated films.

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FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END

For the past seven years, he has been finding experience with Les' Copaque in order to pursue his dream of starting his own company. Since March 2013, only eight people have been involved: studio partners, executives, including Usamah and a few other colleagues. Every work that is screened, according to Usamah Zaid, needs to have its own "soul" in order for the audience to experience a shift in themselves. In contrast to watching animated films and live films, the message, feeling, and journey for each character in an animation should be transparent and able to make a major impact. WAU Animation Studios has always aspired to instil the "soul" in high-quality animation and to inspire everyone who watches it.

According to him, a person's first experience of an animation will decide whether or not the animation has an effect on the viewer. Viewers would not waste their time watching if the animation they are watching does not meet their expectation. As a result, all WAU Animation Studios employees are frequently reminded to share or voice their ideas and opinions with one another in order to achieve the best results in each animation made. The pleasure of working as part of a team within an organisation often contributes to the development of committed and always happy workers who are capable of carrying out their responsibilities. It demonstrates that the employees of WAU Animation Studios, as well as Usamah Zaid himself, are responsible for the success of any animation made, especially "Ejen Ali The Movie."

THE EVOLUTION OF MALAYSIAN ANIMATION PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

The evolution of Malaysia's 3D animation production industry began in 2005 and continues to this day. However, in the last 10 to 15 years, the animation industry has begun to expand and gain government support. This can be seen in secondary education and IPT programmes such as the Diploma in Animation and Bachelor in Design (Animation) offered at many IPT and IPTS in the country. Secondary school students can also participate in animation programmes to learn more about the industry. Keluang Man is one of the older Malaysian animated series. Formerly well-known animators include Kamn Ismail, who created the character Keluang Man in 1997 responsible for the 30 episodes production aired between 1997 and 1998.

The animation industry in Malaysia is increasing and developing, according to Usamah Zaid, but there is no guarantee that it will survive. With the rise of the internet and Information Technology (IT) in society, knowledge in the field of animation has advanced much further. This has the potential to pique the public's interest in the animation industry, especially among young people. As a result, graduates in the field of animation are better equipped to explore the world of animation more broadly and to

create something new. This is what WAU Animation Studios hopes to achieve in order to create unique animation just like “Ejen Ali”.

When WAU Animation Studios decided to create something different from the new animation in Malaysia, they came up with the idea for Ejen Ali. The 25 ideas gathered have demonstrated the originality of the Malaysian spy animation concept. From the aspects of gadgets fitted and luxury cars, the element of action and comedy, the spy genre believed to shine its uniqueness. Following that, the selection or decision of the animation demographic provides the final word about whether or not to proceed with the current concept, even though the broadcaster believes WAU Animation Studios' concept is not appropriate for the target market. Ejen Ali is given unique and special touch on each element through the character in the animation. The action depicted is also appropriate for public viewing, especially by children. This is so that the spectacle can be adjusted regardless of age.

Of course, every animation company faces challenges and is its own dilemma, but Usamah Zaid approaches the situation positively and strives to strike a balance between local brands and global standards. Furthermore, the difficulties of the production aspect of the technical quality of the production and the plot of the animation are considered to ensure that the animation created stands out in the industry. Finally, he stated that the rivalry among the major players in the Malaysian animation industry is a challenge for him and his animation studio to stay competitive in terms of improving the quality of all their productions.

The design of the animated characters in Ejen Ali was influenced by the multi-racial society of Malaysia confirmed by Usamah Zaid. As a result, the plot is more realistic and engaging to watch. To make the story more vibrant or believable, characters and storytelling must be balanced, as in Ejen Ali's animation.

Usamah Zaid describes the ongoing branding for Agent Ali's animation as an issue that needs to be resolved. Every animation should have an ending to avoid boredom among viewers, particularly if the animation is too long, such as until the tenth or fifteenth season. The ending of each animated sequence, according to Usamah Zaid, is important to preserve the brand of animation itself. For example, the Ejen Ali animated series is likely to have five seasons, with subsequent seasons introducing new characters and Ejen Ali becoming an adult in the next world. Even as it enters the season of new characters being developed, an exciting and ongoing concept is needed to keep Ejen Ali fans interested. WAU Animation Studios is always aware of Ejen Ali animation fans' needs and demands in terms of output quality.

EJEN ALI: THE ICON FOR EVERY CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA

The quality of the graphics and the animation are the factors that allow Ejen Ali to achieve international success. According to Usamah Zaid, Ejen Ali's graphics and animation are on par with television animation, though it hasn't been able to match the world's big animation companies like Disney and Dreamwork, but WAU Animation Studios is satisfied with the animation quality and will strive to improve it so that it can compete with the world's biggest animation companies. Next, the requirement for entering the international market is a large work channel or network. This will assist animation studios in promoting their work to other animation studios. Finally, the animated storytelling factor, because storytelling determines whether or not a story succeeds in providing value to the audience, resulting in benefits and satisfaction for the animation company. "Bertindak segera!" or act immediately is one of the famous tagline in Ejen Ali animation. The animated character's storyline has an impact on the direction of the animation in Malaysia as well as around the globe. Ejen Ali's longing for his mother, for example, touched the audience's hearts through a variety of different narratives about his longing for his mother.

THE RM30 MILLION PROFIT ACHIEVED

The achievement of RM30 million from the box office of 'Ejen Ali The Movie' is definitely not a common thing in Malaysia's animation industry. However, piracy threats continue to exist in Malaysia and must be eliminated in order to protect the animation industry. Therefore, Usamah Zaid suggested that the government and the society work together to raise public consciousness about the world of animation, which seems easy but necessitates a great deal of sacrifice and money in the development process. Although the proceeds of the collection for 'Ejen Ali The Movie' totaled RM30 million, half of it was provided to the cinema and the rest was used to develop new animation strategies for the business. He did not, however, deny that piracy aids in the promotion of animations like Upin Ipin.

Apart from individual and societal knowledge, social media contributes to pervasive and unavoidable piracy. The community must support Malaysian animation without prejudice because they can afford or subscribe to an application from another country but cannot afford or subscribe to a local application because it is obsolete and of low quality, despite the fact that many local applications are of international quality.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

These days, finance is the most significant aspect because animated film making requires manpower and high-quality software. The capital for WAU Animation Studios was borrowed from his wife's parents at the start, and it was enough for six months of travel. Additionally, they provide animation development services while also designing ideas for Ejen Ali and eight other main individuals in the company. Usamah Zaid is the one who created the paper work and proposed the concept to a number of people in order to get feedback and raise capital for Ejen Ali's animation.

The concept for Ejen Ali's animation began as a film, but it was changed to a series because there were several non-profit animated films in 2013 and 2014, such as 7N's "Seafood" and Bola Kampong The Movie. While the film Upin & Ipin: The Adventure Begins did well in 2009, the animation studio's next film did not make any money instead of loss. For that reason, WAU Animation Studios decided to transform the film into a series in order to establish a reputation and improve the Ejen Ali brand. Finally, MBACK offered funding for the Ejen Ali animation via a production grant.

The animation campaign for Ejen Ali began when the ad's video was submitted to the YouTube application. Media Prima also contributed a 40% financial grant to WAU Animation Studios, which took about a year of negotiations between the two parties. WAU Animation

Studios, he claims, is also experiencing financial difficulties, which causes workers to be paid later than they should be. Despite this, the spirit of teamwork has allowed them to survive and thrive.

Preparation before joining the animation industry is also very important for students in the field of animation to see this industry as a daunting industry that should not be entered by individuals who lack patience and are always prepared for ups and downs in the industry. Three animated films were successfully screened and received media recognition in 2019, but the animation industry can not rest on its laurels and consider the achievement to be stable to this day. When creating an animation, great sacrifices must often be created, and this condition is similar to that of the Japanese animation industry, where every employee works hard and works overtime without pay to complete an animation. This fact should always be in the minds of any pioneer in this field in order to avoid being too optimistic and to ensure that the animation generated will reach the international market. To be competitive in the animation industry, you must be extremely serious and willing to make significant sacrifices. WAU Animation Studios workers stay awake at night and not go home for two weeks in order to perfect the animation, according to Usamah Zaid. As a result, any prospective venture into the sector must decide if they are willing to make numerous sacrifices or join another industry. Usamah Zaid also frequently advised new employees that animation is not easy, that they must be willing to repeat and renew something over and over again, and that they must be willing to accept pressure in order to succeed in this industry. If every job in this industry can satisfy the prospective or venture, they would be able to go to great lengths to establish themselves and the Malaysian animation industry.

Finally, each animation creation, like WAU Animation Studios, has its own unique style. Usamah Zaid has shown good leadership in bringing his company to new heights and making a name for itself in Malaysia and abroad. The management and thinking styles of each employee can also help to make the WAU Animation Studios work team more quality and successful, while the difficulties and obstacles force WAU Animation Studios to have high expectations in every animation production in Malaysia and to always work hard in the hopes of the animation produced penetrating the international market and boosting the Malaysian animation industry. As a result, WAU Animation Studios' animated film 'Ejen Ali The Movie' is able to have an effect on the audience and the animation industry because it is an animated film with a new and special plot, characters, and graphics that has been able to earn RM30 million in film revenue. Usamah Zaid's aspirations for the future and field ventures are to always be confident and aim for success in the Malaysian animation industry with a positive and relaxed feeling in the animation industry so that more animation field ventures begin to take part in the business.

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