

Alexander Wong's vibrancy and happiness are infectious, so much so that it's no surprise to hear that he's the man behind Jidou – a cute little animated dog who is the main character in a series called JidouSports and is set to make television history in Hong Kong.

Wong was born in Hong Kong in the 1960s and studied in the UK and USA before returning to Hong Kong in the early 1990s with a degree in architecture under his belt. He eventually set up his own company – Asiacity.

"My vision was it would be an architect's office and a place for new ideas, a crucible of innovation. It's a place where people can experiment, create, grow," says Wong.

And that is exactly what happened when Jidou was born out of Wong's initial business concept of vending machine "shops" – the first fully automated smart-card-only vending business in Hong Kong. To humanise this, says Wong, "We thought we needed an icon, an interface between the user and the machine."

Thus was Jidou born. Jidou means "automation" in Japanese and "self-motivation" in Chinese, and it was first shown on screens at the vending machines. Before long Jidou and his friends Dr. Jeff, Jazz and Judo made their way onto local buses. Jidou was also one of the first animations to be downloadable on 3G mobile phones.

Now the cartoon series is gearing up to make that leap into television.

"There's no tradition of independent TV productions here," explains Jidou's inventor, "but we managed to sneak our cartoon into the mainstream. We started things small and then grew slowly. We learned from our mistakes, it was a very interesting journey for us."

Wong is at pains to point out that his company does more than toys and animation, and that "Architecture and animation are closely connected with each other for me. I see them both as forms of art and powerful ways of communication."

Wong has even published his first book, *Naked + White*, and has plans for a second and third to follow.

Through Asiacity, it's obvious that Wong is fulfilling his ambition as an architect; with Jidou he is realising his goal as an innovative thinker and entrepreneur – and a good one at that.

With a childlike glint in his eyes, one can see that Wong is very excited about the prospect of launching Jidou on television and making his little mark in history. www.asiacity.com.hk

BY: DAVID CHUNG PHOTO: WILLIAM FURNISS

Alexander Wong's Jidou dogs are a ubiquitous sight around Hong Kong.



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