

COWBOYS ROPE APPS

Multimedia plan for 'Aliens' universe

By **DAVID S. COHEN**

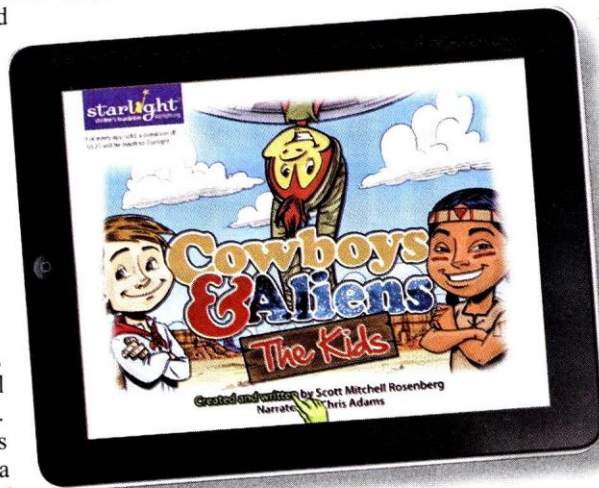
Universal's "Cowboys and Aliens" is just the tip of a very large transmedia iceberg that already spans graphic novels and film and is set to expand further, including a series of interactive storybook apps for kids.

Rolling out this week is the first in the series, "Cowboys and Aliens: The Kids," for Apple iOS and select Android devices. From each sale of the \$4.99 app, 25¢ will be donated to the Starlight Children's Foundation, which benefits seriously ill children and their families.

"The Kids" app is built by Orbit Media Group, which licensed the storyline from Platinum Studios, the company of "Cowboys and Aliens" creator Scott Mitchell Rosenberg.

Rosenberg, who came up with the "Cowboys and Aliens" concept when he was just 13, says there's a bible for the story's universe that spans "literally tens of thousands of pages." The app's story follows

three characters: a cowboy kid named Luke, an Indian kid named T.C. and an extraterrestrial kid, Tymm, from a race that also turns out to be at war with the alien bad-dies seen in the movie.



"It's a story of them meeting each other as kids," Rosenberg said.

Tymm is already the protag of his own line of graphic novels. One of those, "Alien Circus," revolves around his adventures in a performing troupe that is a front for a secret rebel force.

"The idea from the get-go was that 'Cowboys and Aliens: The Kids' was not going to be a one-off," said Orbit founder Chris Adams.

"The Kids" allows children to listen to the story spoken aloud, to color the drawings on the screen and to put their own faces on one

of the characters.

More app-books from the "Cowboys and Aliens" universe are planned for release by year's end, starring each of the three kids in this app. Orbit will build the apps, and Starlight will be the charity tie-in on the entire series.

"The Kids' is empowering to children who read it," said Starlight co-founder Peter Samuelson. "It's about not being scared of things, and being small and young and vulnerable but nevertheless finding your bravery. And when children are seriously ill, boy do they need their bravery."

Adams was instrumental in putting the app deal together. He had built a storytelling app of his own and pitched the idea of an app version of a "Cowboys and Aliens" story to Rosenberg. Rosenberg embraced the idea, and both men wanted a charity tie-in. Adams knew Samuelson from when both were involved with Participant Media.

Besides the interactive apps, there's another "Cowboys and Aliens"-related pic in development — but not at Universal. Platinum is also working with "Harry Potter" producer David Heyman on "Unique," in development at Disney. Storyline also comes from Rosenberg's "Cowboys and Aliens" universe.