

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

Future



MAN OF STEEL

75th Anniversary

Celebrating the art of
Jim Lee, Frank Quitely,
Kenneth Rocafort,
and more!

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COMIC ART

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PLUS! Celebrate 50 years of X-Men art!

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RYAN SOOK!

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THE
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INSIDE

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Welcome... to marvellous new art



This year the two giants of the comic world celebrate anniversaries, with Marvel's X-Men marking 50 years of world saving and Superman hitting the 75-year mark. They both set standards by which comics should be judged. Superman defined the superhero template, while X-Men broke it apart.

Speaking of X-Men, what do you think of our cover art? We're celebrating the team's Jack Kirby roots, with the 60s costumes given a spruce up by the great Adi Granov. His creative process mixes traditional media and Photoshop – read all about it on page 74.

There's more X-Men on page 26, as we take a closer look at the art behind the comic, with X-Men artists Stuart Immonen, Chris Bachalo and Nick Bradshaw all revealing their love of Marvel's mutants.

On page 50 we celebrate the Man of Steel, with a look at Superman's 75 years as arguably the world's best-known superhero. There's art from Jim Lee and Alex Ross, and reflections from Superman artists Ralph 'Rags' Morales, Kenneth Rocafort, Frank Quitely and Tony Daniel on why DC's old man of comics is the pinnacle of the genre.

If you want to join these artists in the comic industry, then turn to our workshops section, starting on page 73, where Ash Thorp breaks his creative block and Ryan Sook establishes mood in his comic art.

Speaking of milestones, ImagineFX will soon smash through the 100th issue mark. To help us celebrate we're asking you to vote for your favourite fantasy artist, and the ImagineFX cover that really took your breath away. Find out more at <http://vote.imaginefx.com>.

Ian Dean, Editor
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Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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Featured artists

ImagineFX brings together some of the world's finest artists to share their techniques and inspiration for creating stunning artwork



Sam Nielson



Also known as Sammich to his online followers, Sam is a concept artist with Avalanche

Software/Disney Interactive, and creates fun video games. He's also a regular teacher with Bobby Chiu's Imaginism Studios. This issue Sam explores how to use and balance light and colour in your art, while controlling the viewer's attention. Read his workshop on page 78.

www.bit.ly/ifx-snelson



Ash Thorp



Ash is a film concept artist with a strong connection to Marvel. Having already worked

on Thor, Iron Man 3, The Amazing Spider-Man and X-Men: First Class, Ash loves his Marvel heroes. What started as a Punisher painting, soon became an original character as Ash reveals how to absorb your influences to break creative block. Turn to page 80 to find out more!

www.ashthorp.com



Sookyoung Oh



Known as Osuk2 online, Sookyoung Oh is a concept artist working in the Korean video games industry,

on titles such as the role-playing game Queen's Blade and the card battle game Legend of the Cryptids. She specialises in anime and manga-themed video game character art and this issue, on page 84, the artist shares her process for designing a character in the anime style.

www.bit.ly/ifx-sy-oh



Brian Sum



Having worked on some of the biggest role-playing games, such as Mass Effect 2 and 3 (as

well as the forthcoming Mass Effect 4) for Montreal-based BioWare, Brian is an expert at painting hard surfaces. This issue the artist shares some of his techniques for painting the reflective chrome surface of his robot character. You can read Brian's workshop in full on page 88 and pick up some vital tips.

www.briansum.com



Ryan Sook



Ryan has over 20 years of experience in the comic industry drawing covers and interior art

primarily for DC, from Batman to Zatanna and Hawkman. Working traditionally, Ryan is a stickler for getting the core techniques correct, skills that can transfer to digital. On page 90, Ryan shares his tips for controlling the mood of black and white line art, using examples from Batman, The Flash and Before Watchmen.

www.ryansook.com



Ross Tran



Ross has recently graduated from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena and begun a career

in the television industry, creating concept art for upcoming shows. The talented artist creates loose, suggestive art and this issue he reveals how to avoid the pitfalls of painting in such a style. Turn to page 98 to see how discipline and control over your mistakes can lead to more expressive art.

www.rosstran.net





ImagineFX Cover artist

Discover how to paint comic art the Marvel way, and who better to teach us than Iron Man's very own Adi Granov!



Adi Granov

COUNTRY: England

SOFTWARE: Traditional and Photoshop

WEB: www.adigranov.net

Adi is best known for all things Iron Man, from the famous Extremis storyline to the mood art behind the new film trilogy. But this issue Adi powers down his Stark Industries influences and instead delivers a fantastic, astonishing, uncanny portrait of X-Men's famous twosome.



In progress

How Adi gave our cover the X-factor...



As we're in the 50th year of the X-Men we choose a mutant-themed cover and decide on the two central heroes of the team: Cyclops and Jean Grey. We also decide to draw on the Jack Kirby designs. Adi turns in two quick sketches. We like the triangle composition of the second sketch, but the more natural anatomy of the first.



Our composition chosen, we ask Adi to give his Jean Grey a little more of a natural figure to echo Kirby's original designs. Adi sends over his clean line art, and save for some touches, we're good to go.



The final art arrives with Adi's now-familiar polish. The iconic Kirby costumes and dual-character pose works wonderfully. It's hard to update classic characters and keep them modern, but Adi's done a great job. See his workshop on page 74.



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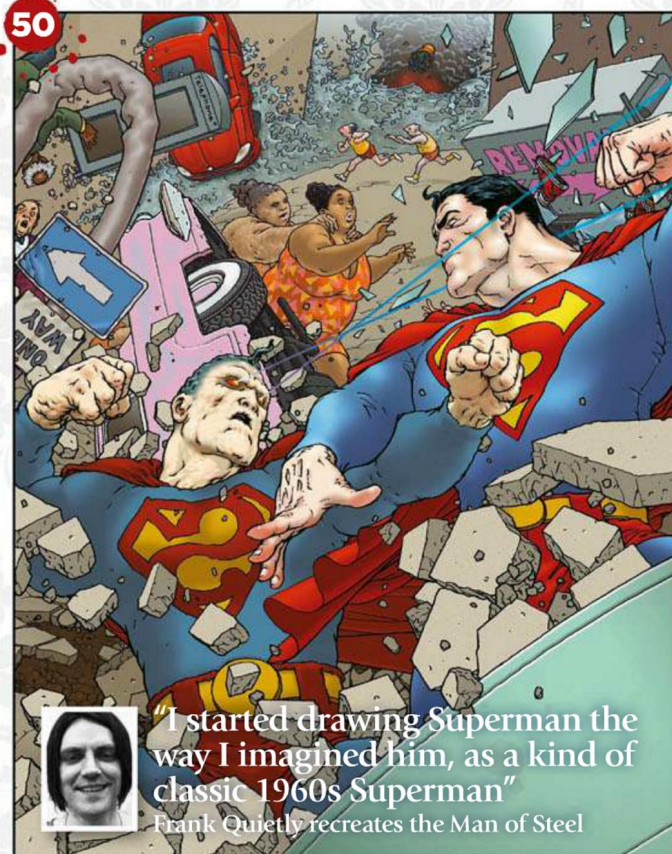
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Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art ➔



ImagineFX Workshops

Advice and techniques from pro artists...



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Marvel artist Adi Granov paints two heroic X-Men.



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How to watch your video workshops

Where you see this badge you'll find an accompanying video workshop. Click the link to watch the artist at work.

WATCH THIS!

www.bit.ly/ifx97-beach



78



Use lighting creatively

88



Contrast your elements



Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Tincek Marincek

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter,
Paint Tool SAI



Twenty-year-old Valentina and his sister Marina are twins, and both are studying at the Academy of Fine Arts within the

University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Valentina has picked up commissioned work alongside his studies, creating game characters and tutorials. He works digitally and traditionally, and his mature style has been nurtured since childhood.

"I started to draw when I was three years old and I have drawn since then," he says. "My parents supported myself and my sister in drawing, and even when I was a kid I liked to sketch things all over the place. I like to create fantasy characters in imaginary worlds so I can escape from ordinary life for a bit."

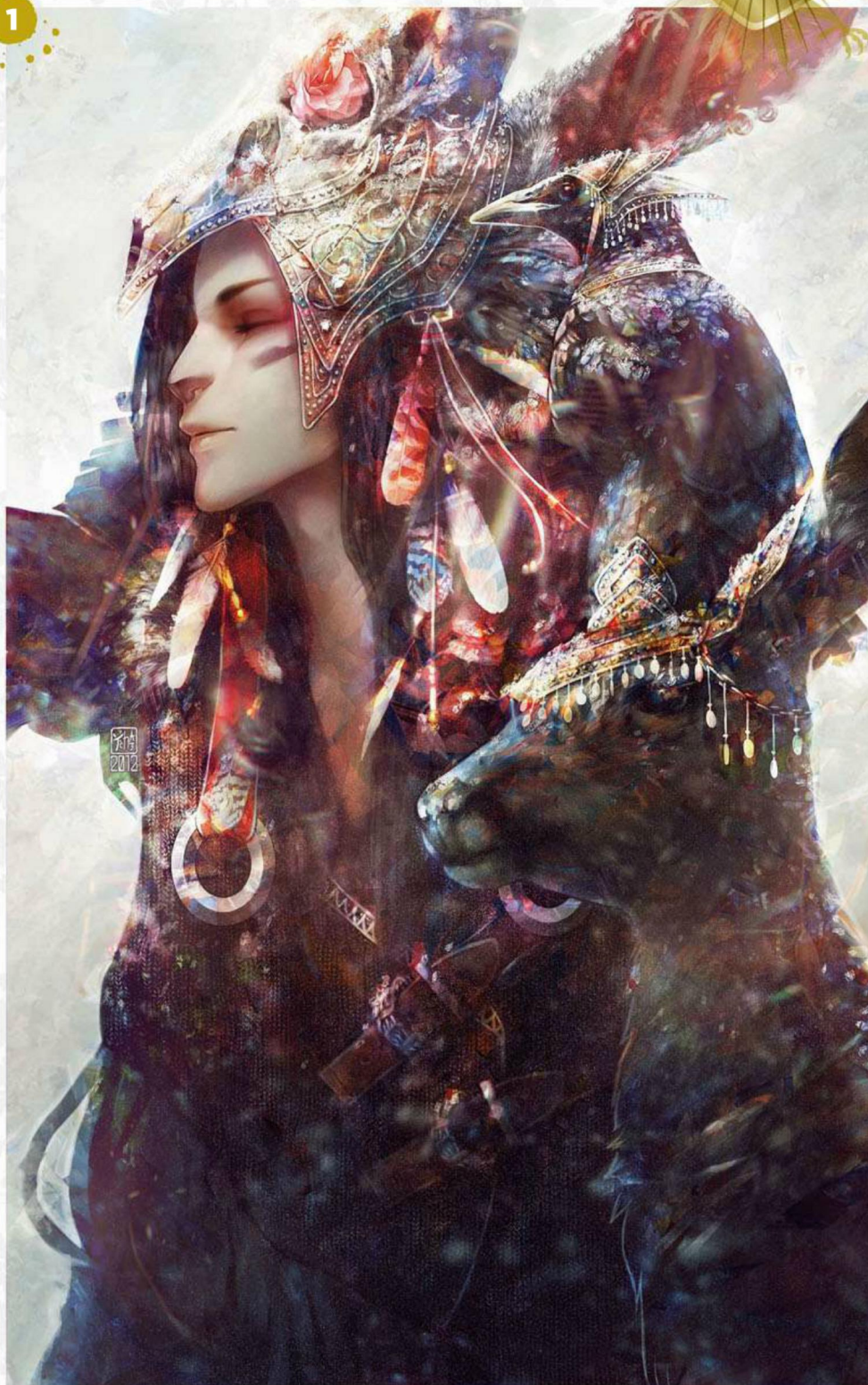
1 FOREST SPIRITS "My character is half human and half animal. Around him, animals have accessories so that they look more spiritual. I painted in black and white first, and then added colours and effects."

2 CARPE DIEM "This was the cover for my art book, and the first time I included more than two characters in one painting. I wanted to achieve a cheerful and fun atmosphere. In the course of painting it, I changed it from landscape to portrait orientation."



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Congratulations Tincek - you've won yourself a copy of *Exposé 10* and *d'artiste: Character Design*! To find out more about these two great books, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.





Artist crit

Imaginary Friends artist
Chris Ng acknowledges
Tincek's artistic choices...



"Overall the colours look great and in particular the use of the red on the girl (contrasting with the blues) is just right because it makes her the focus of the image."

Sören Meding

LOCATION: Germany

WEB: www.meding.blogspot.com

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Hamburg resident Sören's day job is working as a graphic artist for print media, but he seizes every chance he can to create his own works. He only became aware of concept art two years ago, and has been making it ever since, turning his hand to dreamy fantasy and retro-tinged sci-fi with equal skill. "Painting," he says, "has found its way into every part of my life and outlives one's career, one's wishes and, indeed, the aging process itself."

Sören is always seeking inspiration, and cites Feng Zhu's tutorial videos as a great help. But he's also acutely aware of the importance of being part of a community filled with artists who excite and inspire him to create new work. "I'll simply go on painting whatever happens," Sören says philosophically.

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"As a first step in digital art Sören's Evening Sun is a great start because he's transferred his core skills, such as his lighting and composition, into a digital painting. He's got the basics right, making everything gel."

Ian Dean,
Editor

1



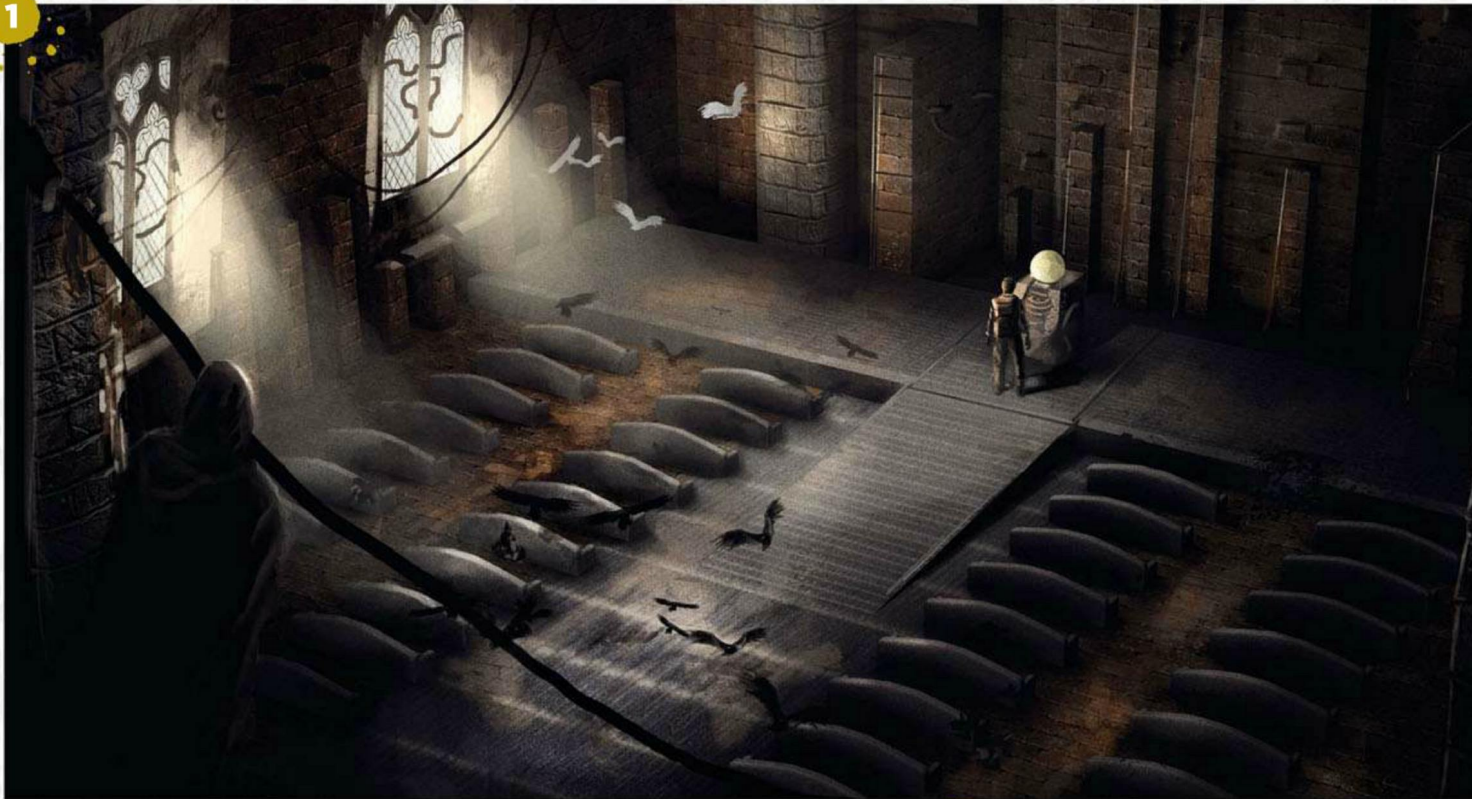
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1 ARABIC MARKET "I love medieval stuff. We've got a romantic view of the age, but swords and campfires rock! I also used this painting to learn about the use of reference images."

2 EVENING SUN "This was one of my first real digital paintings, and I used this to test my skills. It took me a long time to figure out what's happening on my canvas. In a way it's the starting point for everything that followed."

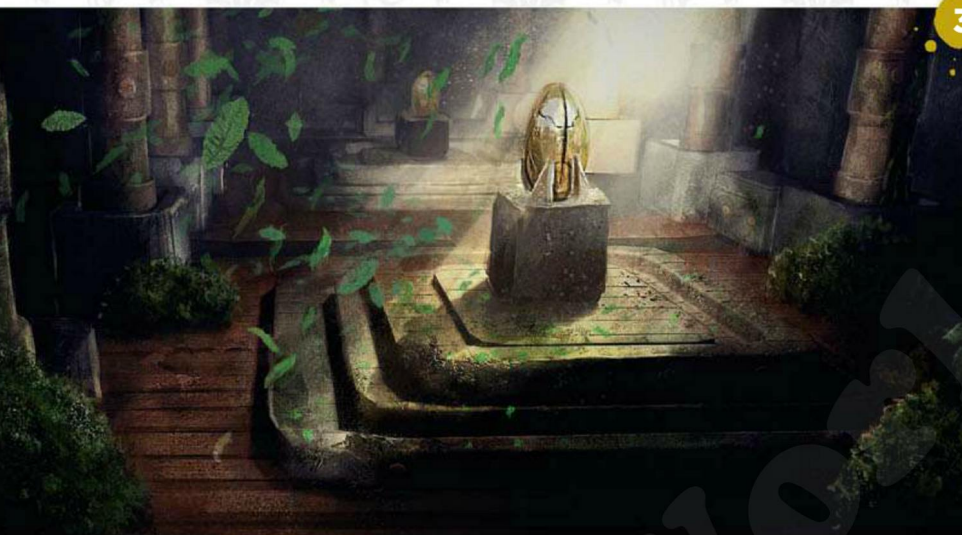
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2



3



Julien Truman

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SOFTWARE: 3ds Max, Photoshop, ZBrush



Julien began painting via the world of games-influenced 3D art, but picked up his 2D skills while studying at the Art Institute of California, Los Angeles.

Julien's background in 3D has given him an insight into perspective and composition that, along with his desire to tell stories, bring his paintings to life. "Adding a little story to your art helps you see where it's going a lot more quickly," he says.

1 IN THE SHADOWS "Here I used a high camera angle and character viewpoint to create a feeling of being watched. The hooded character is there to keep order and confront unexpected visitors."

2 TEMPLE ENTRANCE "I experimented with a few different views for this composition, ultimately settling on a worms-eye view. I added a few birds to give a sense of scale, but made sure that the emphasis of the piece was on the temple area."

3 FOR THE GOLD "I learned a lot from this painting in terms of technique. I wanted to create a ruined garden, bringing out the focal point as much as I could while making sure the rest of the image wasn't competing with it."

Nathália Suellen

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Poser



The art of Lady Symphonia – aka Nathália Suellen – embraces the darker side of fantasy art, and is created with a mix of photography, 3D elements and digital painting. While she categorises it as “dark art”, it’s the judicious use of splashes of colour that catch the eye.

“I try to make my work look as cinematic as possible,” she says. “I love imaginative movies, but I combine them with Brazilian folklore and carnival costumes.” It’s a unique approach that’s proved highly successful: her client roster includes Random House, Penguin and Simon and Schuster.

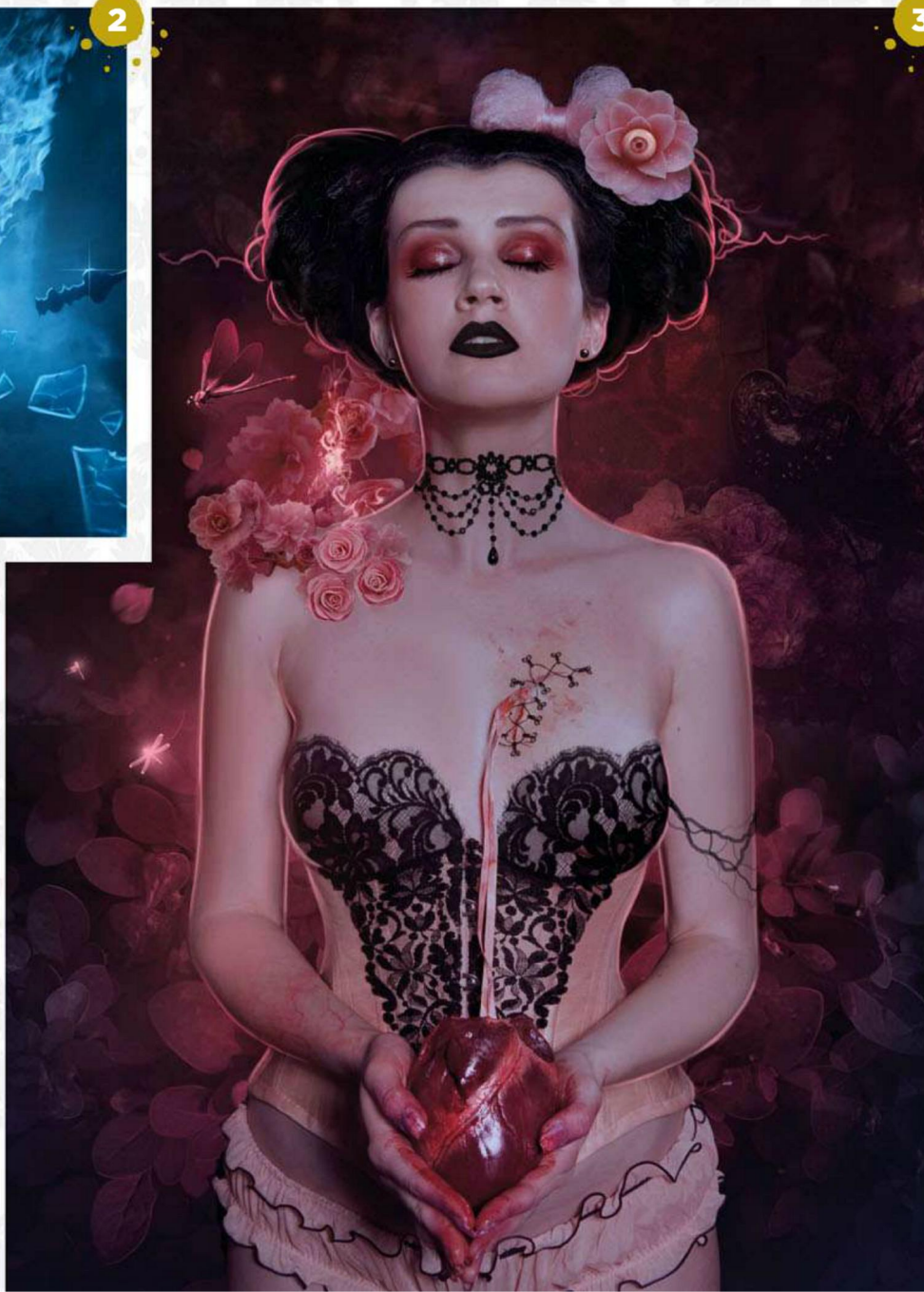
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1 ELIXIR OF LIFE “This image incorporates jewellery, water drops, roses, lots of glitter – and a parrot. I tried to show my view about immortality, about real life. We can only be immortal through death. I believe our souls are immortal, so there’s nothing to fear.”

2 END OF TIMES “I was inspired by the I Am Legend comics, which portray the last survivor of London. It’s a mix of digital painting and photo-collage, and many elements were hand-painted. At the beginning it was supposed to be a series, and I’d like to do more post-apocalyptic art that features other countries as well. I love the theme of the future and the end of the world – it helps people to think about how frivolous we are.”

3 QUEEN OF HEARTS “Maybe one of my best works. Queen Of Hearts is obviously inspired by Alice in Wonderland. I made it to take part in a contest in which the theme was our own wonderlands. Making the dress was laborious, but worth it – I think!”

1



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"The restrained colour palette and enveloping shadow in Andro Knight enables the small details to stand out. The knight's expression, the armour's glint, the material of her costume... it's a subtle yet strong piece."

Beren Neale,
Features Editor

1 **Graeme McCormack**

LOCATION: Canada

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, ZBrush



Freelance concept artist and illustrator Graeme graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 2009, and has since been building up his client base and experience within the industry.

His work encompasses science fiction and fantasy, with distinctive lighting and shading and an evident love of shiny armour and clothing.

Living in Canada means Graeme is slap bang in the middle of one of the world's biggest games industries, too – something that recently paid off. "I had an amazing opportunity to play a small part in the making of Halo 4 as one of the artists contracted by The Sequence Group," he says. "I worked on paintings and concepts for terminal animations. It was a great experience!"

1 ANDRO KNIGHT "I wanted to create an androgynous warrior woman and use it as an excuse to paint some cool costume materials! I tried to make her look powerful and proud while retaining her more feminine qualities."

2 MOULD QUEEN "A piece of concept art for a fungal queen. I spent a lot of time making Photoshop brushes to create the unique texture of stringy mould coming from her eyes and the dusty mould around her lips and face."

3 THE HUNTING PARTY "This illustration features the Andro Knight in a spot of trouble. One of my favourite things to do is design a character and then make them do something. I used strong light to draw attention to the character, while softening focus and dulling background colours."

2



3



1



Matt Hubel

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.matthubel.com

EMAIL: matt@matthubel.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Matt's career began as a motion graphics artist in sport, but he found himself vying for creativity. Digital painting presented a new and more satisfying challenge, and the Gnomon Workshop's monthly challenges helped push him in the right direction and shape his art.

Matt embraces the hyper-real, which may have been influenced by his CGI idents for football teams. He spends most of his time working on trading card game concept art, as well as occasional visual effects. "My goals are to either become a full-time concept artist, or to be able to sustain myself on freelance illustrations," he says.

2



3



1 MOUSE TRAP "An entrant in Gnomon Workshop's 2D monthly challenge, entitled Genetic Hybrid, which I won. I attribute this to the bunny slippers."

2 MISTBORN "I recently read Brandon Sanderson's Mistborn trilogy and fell in love with it. This is my very loose interpretation of the character."

3 IMMORTAL DEATH SQUAD "Here's a world where organic life is hunted down and either exterminated or forced to convert themselves into synthetic, immortal beings."

4 ARCHANGEL "I regularly paint with some friends and every month we have a new painting topic. This specific month was Cupid, so I kind of riffed on that until I came up with something a little more fun."



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Matt's covering a lot of bases in his art: on display is rich storytelling, humorous scenes and powerful character studies. And you have to pity the young lovers on the receiving end of his kick-ass Cupid's arrows!"

Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

Andrea Errico

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter



Andrea's love of the sci-fi genre was stirred while he was studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Naples. "After I saw Ghost in the Shell, Neon Genesis, Cowboy Bebop and The Matrix my interest grew a lot," he says. His work combines elements of these key films with video games (his other passion) and conventional tropes such as zombies, impossibly curvy women and impossibly curvy zombies.

Because he trained in the fine arts, Andrea begins each new piece conventionally. "My work process usually starts by using pencil and paper," he says. "Then I scan and complete the illustration digitally using Photoshop." At the moment, he works as a freelance illustrator and comic book artist for independent publishers and software houses.

1 UNDER ARREST - HAPPY 2109

"I wanted to demonstrate my skills in digital painting, my love for sci-fi themes and mecha design, and express myself and my personality. The illustration brings to mind those anime classics Ghost in the Shell and Appleseed."

2 TIGER AND SNOW "The inspiration for this illustration was a photo of a tiger in a wintry landscape. In that picture she looked proud and bold while she was walking through the pure white snow. I love the idea of merging animals and motorbikes, so this is a fusion between a mechanical tiger and a powerful Honda Hornet."

3 MK TRIBUTE "I've always been a fan of Mortal Kombat. The reboot of the series prompted me to do a tribute to the game. I focused on my favourite characters: Scorpion and Subzero. I also wanted to portray the eternal fight between the two combatants, frozen in a flawless flame. Toasty!"



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"With such a passion for all things shiny and robotic, Andrea seems to be right at home with creating character-driven artwork with distinctive manga influences and plenty of attitude."

Nicola Henderson,
Staff Writer



1

Leeanne M Krecic

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SOFTWARE: Manga Studio, Photoshop, SketchUp



After poor health cut short Leeanne's career as a professional musician she decided to go back to her other passion: drawing.

"Music had been a part of my life for over a decade and not being able to perform as a creative outlet was a struggle," she says. "Although I used to draw when I was a child, I didn't really pick up the pen and palette until I was in my late 20s."

She's taken to her newfound hobby like a duck to water, and picked up commissions while working on her personal art. "I regret that I didn't get into it sooner," she says. "I'll always feel like there is so much more to learn when it comes to my artwork. But I'm just happy to have a creative outlet again."

2



1 THE BLACK DAHLIA "I decided to make this piece look like the cover of an old noir crime novel by giving it a title, censor bars and a bold-coloured background. The foot lying by her side at an odd angle and flat, lifeless hair convey the dark themes of the book."

2 TOUGH "The character Toph Bei Fong from Avatar: The Last Airbender. She's one of my favourite characters. This piece was my first attempt at painting realism."

Jose Vega

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Jose's career has taken him all over South and North America. Born in Puerto Rico, he studied media arts and animation before

becoming a 3D visualisation artist in Florida. After four years in the Sunshine State he returned to his home country to become a concept artist and illustrator, and he's busy working on card illustrations, maps and environments for companies such as Fantasy Flight Games and Cryptozoic Entertainment.

His key strength is conveying a sense of drama and excitement through colourful and beautifully composed images. He's always on the lookout for new commissions, too. "I tend to work on indie projects, as well as small personal projects for clients," he says. "My passion for art grows more and more each day, and I love the challenge that a new project brings."

1 RED SEA "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left."

2 T-RUSH "This is an environment concept illustration for a game set in the western genre. I studied images of a typical western setting to get it right."

3 GUNDABAD "This is a Goblin-colonised mountain at the northern end of the Misty Mountains. It's set in Tolkien's Middle-earth, which is a key influence for me. I enjoyed creating a piece with a wintry and cold setting."

SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

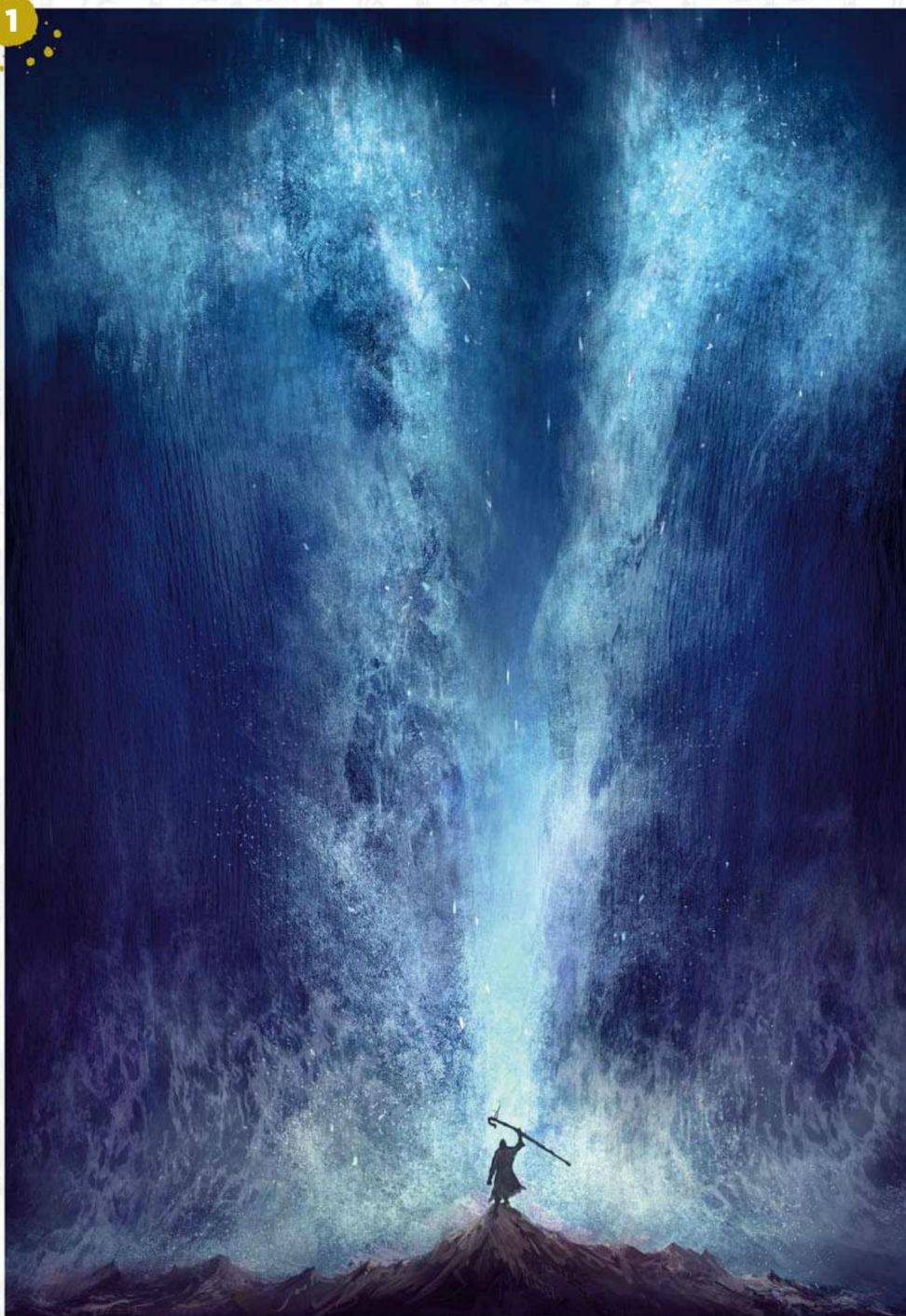
Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them. fxpose@imaginefx.com

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:

FXPosé
ImagineFX
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW
UK

1



2



IMAGINEFX CRIT

"There's a lovely sense of movement and scale in Jose's Red Sea image – the parting waves that lead the viewer's eye to the figure of Moses works well. And you can almost feel the cold wind in his Misty Mountain art!"

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

PURSUE YOUR PASSION!

CROOZ is an expanding Japanese online games company and it's on the hunt for great artists, so portfolios at the ready...



ASTERIA

Deity Wars features some striking anime-style character designs.

IDEION

The CROOZ art style, particularly for Deity Wars, is a rich and distinctive mix of colour and detail.



With an enviable track record in Japan and ambitions to spread its distinctive brand of artwork-driven social gaming to every corner of the globe, CROOZ is hungry for fresh illustrators.

If you missed its last callout in issue 93 then fear not: the door is still very much open for talented ImagineFX readers with the skill and drive to help CROOZ take its operation to the next level.

Since entering the social games market in 2010, the company has rocketed into the top three games developers on Japanese platform Mobage, boasting more than 20 million registered users. But its sights are firmly set on the number one spot, and you could help it achieve that goal.

CROOZ's most popular game is Ragnabreak, which is better known to players outside Japan as Deity Wars. With more than 3.6 million players across the globe, it's renowned for



SVAROG

Even when depicting dark figures, CROOZ's artists manage to oek out a beautiful design.



DARK ARTIMA

Can you paint characters like
those of CROOZ's art team?

July 2013

ImagineFX





PHARAOH

Deity Wars features an imaginary world with three spaces: Heaven, Earth and Hell, and loads of great characters, like Pharaoh.



AMARYLLIS

Cards in Deity Wars evolve and level-up, so each new card 'level' needs to feel special and stunning. Will you be one of the artists to develop CROOZ's card art?



the superb quality of its original artwork.

The game's art director Daisuke looks for a broad range of skills to ensure

everything from the emotions on a character's face to the overall world of the game are just right. And with overseas expansion plans high up CROOZ's agenda, his selection criteria for new artists include broad global appeal.

"Characters such as Succubus and Pharaoh are good examples of characters

DAMIEN

Japanese anime-style art is popular around the world, so CROOZ is looking for illustrators who can adopt this style into its art process.



HELIOS

The Deity Wars art cards have well-balanced proportions that, says Daisuke, Japanese people would recognise as beautiful and cool cards.

popular worldwide," he says. "However, the Japanese anime-style is also very popular, so we're looking for illustrators that can adopt the good points of Japanese style, too."

In addition to individual art style, Daisuke explains that the fundamental skills of drawing anatomy, realistic

Players must feel they want to evolve the card to the next stage, so we always create attractive levelled-up versions

clothing and accessories are all crucial to make it in this field generally, and to catch his eye in particular.

Deity Wars is set in the three spaces of Heaven, Hell and Earth – separate dimensions that are colliding. Players collect character cards, discover new powers and battle for supremacy. Where some games put considerably more creative energy into a game's rarer cards, for CROOZ

quality and attention to detail is paramount across the board – again putting the onus on a consistently strong roster of talent.

Each character has several iterations to be developed. "Cards in Deity Wars evolve by four steps, and have three extra 'levelled up' versions in addition to the original one," says Daisuke. "We must make players

feel they want to evolve the card to the next stage, so we always make the effort to create attractive levelled-up versions."

Another illustration-heavy game in CROOZ's growing catalogue is Knights of Avalon, an original browser-based fantasy RPG based on the classic Arthurian legend. "As one of Arthur's knights, players fight against the notorious traitor, Mordred, on the floating continent Avalon," explains



ANDROMEDA

Illustrator: Mirei Kobayashi

An illustrator on CROOZ's successful Deity Wars social role-playing game, Mirei Kobayashi shares her card art process...



1 I begin by examining the brief and deciding on what to create. I wanted to draw a female character wearing a beautiful piece of clothing in a sea of stars.

2 With my idea developing, now is the time when the shapes of the character's body, hair, costume and all other objects in the illustration are finalised.

BACKGROUND ART

Great card art needs to tell a story in one image, so a rich background can be just as important as a character's expression.



SUCCUBUS

Characters such as Succubus, shown here, are good examples of characters who are popular worldwide with fans of CROOZ's Deity Wars.



3 Now I must plan for how the art will look when it's a card. So I zoom out a bit so that there's more space for the character when I fit it into the card frame.



4 With the composition set I begin to finish the character, giving her a sparkling and glittery look because she's the Protector Queen of the galaxy.



5 Now I begin to make a final pass of the illustration, giving it that polished sheen that's consistent with the CROOZ style. I'm looking to enhance the overall feel of the piece, so I add the materials that change the character's silhouette.



EXPANDING ART APPEAL

CROOZ intends to expand Avalon's character roster, features and in-game elements and needs new artists to take on the illustrations. Will you be one?



ART CLASSES

Each character is designed to fit a class, such as an archer, priest, wizard or lancer.

game director Max. Like Deity Wars, the game is available on Mobage. Over a million people subscribed in the first five months, putting Knights of Avalon in the top 10 on the platform.

Beautiful fantasy art remains at the core of Knights of Avalon, where players form a team and enjoy real-time battles – and CROOZ has plans to add many more characters and features to the game, so there are plenty of opportunities for talented artists to get involved.



A medieval realm of swords, shields and suits of armour brings a different set of challenges compared with Deity Wars. Jun is the art

VIVIAN



Illustrator: Yoshiro Ambe

Another member of the CROOZ team, Yoshiro Ambe guides us through the creation of his latest card art...



1 I start by sketching my ideas. In this stage I think about the composition and all of the aspects required in the character illustration. I like to create a number of sketches to work through my ideas, before choosing one to take through to the final artwork.



2 I start drawing based on the most attractive sketch shown in the first step. This is the most crucial step because the image I have here directly links to the final art.



3 I look at the balance of the whole illustration. I make sure that the shape of the character's body looks fine and there's no unnatural space in the illustration.

HOW TO APPLY

CROOZ is actively looking for new artists to bring their skills to Deity Wars and Knights of Avalon. Here's how you can put yourself forward

1 Start by preparing your portfolio with four or five of your strongest (not necessarily favourite) pieces of art. This is the optimum number of images to really get the art director's attention. You can either save them as Jpegs and send them via email, or provide a link to your online gallery.

2 Mail your portfolio images, or web link to illustrator_apply@crooz.co.jp with your name and company name (if required).

3 CROOZ will reply to you, hopefully giving you the opportunity to become part of this most talented illustration team.

4 For more amazing art and insight visit our website at www.imaginefx.com for regular news from CROOZ. Here you'll find advice from CROOZ artists with portfolio tips, and insight into what it takes to work for this exciting company. And, of course, more art to study.



Creating a large variety of characters that attract players' hearts is our mission

director overseeing the game and, like Daisuke, he stresses the importance of great artwork: "Creating a large variety of characters that attract players' hearts is our mission," he smiles. "It's up to the player whether he or she chooses a brave, courageous looking character or one with a more bewitching look," adds Jun, "so it's exciting to see your character moving within the game, and becoming popular."

When briefing an illustrator for a new character, he allows a healthy amount of creative freedom to ensure that individual style has a chance to shine through. Of course, it's still important to maintain unity throughout the game: careful art direction from CROOZ is essential.

"First, we give the illustrator a written direction sheet with a basic plot and characteristics," begins Jun. "We want them to use their imagination, and so we don't give detailed restrictions or requirements at this point."

There are two main feedback stages with the art director: the rough draft, where basic composition and design is discussed, and any changes requested; and the colouring stage, where overall details such as the background or effects used are considered.



KNIGHTLY QUEST

Play as one of King Arthur's knights and you'll fight against Mordred on the floating land of Avalon, in CROOZ's latest game Knights of Avalon.

So what kind of illustration talent is Jun looking for, and how do you impress him? First up, you need the skills to wow him instantly: "The illustration must have a strong, high-impact look at first glance," he explains. "This requires skills in sketching, designing and decorating, and drawing beautiful faces."

It's also about style. "Knights of Avalon sits between the thick-layered colouring style and the anime-style often seen in Japanese animations," says Jun, adding that a balance between realism and fantasy is important, too.

It's clear that CROOZ nourishes the talent of its illustrators, providing the guidance and art direction required to get exactly the artwork it needs. Its company motto is to create Cool and Fun, which speaks volumes about what it's like to work as an illustrator on CROOZ's books.

So if you think you're up for the challenge and can bring a can-do attitude and a strong set of illustration skills to games like Deity Wars and Knights of Avalon as they continue to grow their international fan-base, CROOZ would love to hear from you.

If you're successful, you'll be expected to spend up to a month on each illustration, depending on the level of detail required – although as both Daisuke and Jun make clear, every character counts.

All you need to do is send your portfolio through to CROOZ for consideration, and before you know it you could be forming part of the all-important talent roster that's at the heart of everything it does.

Apply now by sending your work and details to: illustrator_apply@crooz.co.jp



4 I finish by adding precise details and effects, and making the character blend in to the background by adjusting the colour of light and the usage of space.



5 The Deity Wars art changes as it evolves over four steps. When adding effects and decorations, I make sure the character doesn't become obscured by these visual enhancements. Notice that the chipped sword shown in step four has been repaired.

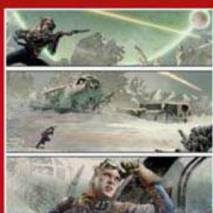
ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE TRENDS

ImagineFX Nation

AT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY COMMUNITY



As a regular artist on the All-New X-Men series, Stuart Immonen's artwork for #8 is a particular treat.



THE RETURN OF THE LUCAS

Dark Horse is releasing an eight-part comic series based on George Lucas's long-forgotten, original tales, written 30 years ago and called *The Star Wars*. **Page 30**



ATTACK MINDE

Alvin Lee's dining-room-cum-dual-desk combo is arranged with the principles of feng shui (and, quite naturally, ninja attacks) very much in mind. **Page 32**



CUP O' DOODLE

Drawings on online sketch jam Cup O' Doodle always start with a loose squiggle or random jumble – and tend to turn into things much prettier. **Page 35**



X-celsior!

Happy birthday The X-Men are turning 50 this year and Marvel is pulling out all the stops to mark the occasion in style

If there's ever been a comic series that stands up for the people, it's X-Men. Race, politics, sexuality and equality – throughout its entire history, the X-Men have long stood as proud beacons for the voices that deserve to be heard. And with its mesmerising cast of misfits and legendary storylines, it's no wonder the X-Men have become some of the most celebrated pop culture icons of the past 50 years.

So what makes the X-Men unique? Back in 1963, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created a team of teenage superheroes who, unlike Marvel's existing canon of scientifically enhanced characters such as Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four, were born with genetic mutations that resulted in unique super-human abilities. As cool as these special powers were, however, our so-called mutants soon find themselves shunned by society.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS



"Like all Marvel heroes, the X-Men have feet of clay," says Stuart Immonen, long-term Marvel artist and co-creator of the All-New X-Men. "They are

Jack Kirby's original artwork for X-Men issue #1 has become one of the most iconic comic book covers of all time.



John Byrne is widely regarded as one of the most defining artists to work on the franchise, especially with his artwork for the Dark Phoenix Saga.



disenfranchised, ostracised by the very society they are dedicated to helping, which I think is a feeling a lot of people can identify with at various points in their lives."

Indeed, what makes the series so unique is that its stories and characters are defined by actively challenging social norms. Even last year Marvel made global headlines when the first ever gay marriage in a comic book took place in *Astonishing X-Men* #51, in the immediate aftermath of the legalisation of same-sex marriages in the state of New York (which is where the

READER COMMENTS

LOVING THE X-MEN

Which X-Men covers and artists do our readers treasure most?

Dominic Kearns



"I love the X-Men comics. They've had the single greatest impact on my own drawing style. I was

always fascinated by the characters and their amazing powers, along with the wildly different versions of them, created by so many artists over the years. My favourite team member is Cyclops – he's always been described as a natural leader, and I like that idea. In regards to artists, Chris Bachalo produced some brilliant and memorable artwork, especially in the Age of Apocalypse series. I also love Sam Kieth's awesome work in the Wolverine Hulk miniseries – it's so unique. This is what I love about Marvel – there's so much artistic variety on offer."

Kirk Troy



"My favourite X-Men cover is issue #137 by John Byrne. Not only was it the end of an iconic storyline, but it

was also the beginning of a lifetime of comic collecting for me. Before this, I used to wander over to the comics section at the local supermarket and pick up an occasional issue. But after this one, I devoured comics and especially the X-Men. To this day, Chris Claremont and John Byrne have created some of the greatest X-Men comics."

Euan Mactavish



"The definitive X-Men creative team, for me, is Chris Claremont, John Byrne and Terry Austin. At their peak,

they created tales that stretched the boundaries of the imagination and the superhero genre, most noticeably the Dark Phoenix and Days of Future Past storylines, the events of which are still echoing around the Marvel Universe to this day."

“They are disenfranchised, ostracised by the society they are dedicated to helping”



After co-creating the Generation X series in 1994, Chris Bachalo returns to the cast with this artwork for All New X-Men #6.

team are based). And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Today, many of Marvel's most popular artists grew up under the spell of illustrators such as Jack Kirby, Jim Steranko, Dave Cockrum and John Byrne, all renowned for their innovative creations. "I grew up reading the X-Men comics, and my first job at Marvel, some 20 years ago, was drawing those same characters," says Stuart. It's a sentiment shared by fellow X-Men regular Nick Bradshaw: "I always look at these



characters with a fanboy's eyes," he says. "I remember buying my first X-Men comic back in 1986 for a family road trip, and they were just so odd compared to other heroes. I was hooked!"

When you consider the best-selling comic of all time is still Jim Lee's X-Men #1 from Marvel's revision of the series in 1991, it would seem that we all still are.

A GOLDEN JUBILEE

To mark the occasion in style, Marvel is releasing special commemorative covers, made especially for the significant milestone. There's still more to come, but if the current releases have been anything to go by, we're in for a very special treat.

The current flagship X-title, All-New X-Men, has to date featured interlocking variant covers by fan-favourites Chris Bachalo, Nick Bradshaw and Stuart Immonen, along with a further outstanding

Clay Mann's anniversary artwork for X-Factor #250 is a breathtaking gathering of the greats - can you spot your favourite characters?



John Byrne's classic Days of Future Past story arc (1981) will be revisited in Bryan Singer's 2014 film.

X-Factor cover by Clay Mann. Stuart explains how each artist was asked to "participate in a group effort to create a massive interlinked metacover to celebrate the X-Men's milestone anniversary."

BALANCING ACTS

With the guidance of Marvel Editor Jeanine Schaefer, fellow artist Chris Bachalo



sketched out cover templates for each artist to follow.

"Indeed, this saved me a step in the normal cover creation process," says Stuart. "Apart

tackle was the content, which was going to dictate the layout of my cover and keeping that connectivity for the other artists.

"Also, the logistics of things like overlapping characters or errant powers firing off the page that could have potentially caused problems for the other artists was always on my mind."

Things were a little different for Clay, whose special variant cover for X-Factor #250 gathers together virtually every character that has appeared in the X-Factor splinter team



“I bought my first X-Men comic in 1986. They were so odd compared to other heroes. I was hooked!”

from the usual considerations such as creating dynamic, exciting poses for the characters, and showing them using their respective powers, the only unusual aspect to this assignment was to make sure the edges of the drawing connected exactly with the covers next to it."

Although Chris's templates would have made the composition process somewhat more manageable, the goal to create complex artwork that stood up on its own while supporting the covers "at the flank," as Nick describes, was a worthy challenge for the artists who've worked on the series over recent years. "For me, the main thing to

created by Cyclops and Jean Grey back in 1986. "It's funny because I thought it was just an ordinary variant at first," he says. "If I knew what it was for, I might have made sure I didn't accidentally forget a few characters. The fans like to remind me, of course."

Regardless of a few absentees, the piece is still pretty spectacular. X-Factor was created as a means of uniting old and new team members, which meant an intensive building process for the celebratory piece in question. "It started out with the current team, but then I just wanted to draw all of the X-Men I could in their older styles or my favourite versions. I knew that I wanted




Wolverine has become something of a mentor for the younger mutants over recent times, as Nick Bradshaw explores in the art for All-New X-Men #7.

it to surround Cyclops and Havok, as they're both the leaders I think of with X-Factor. I tried to slowly build on that, so you'll see Jean Grey next to Scott and Polaris next to Alex. The hardest part was filling in each spot as it slowly started to build up with characters."

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

"For me, it's the X-Men that will always stand out," says Clay, and he's not alone. If there's one thing the talented artists and writers behind the scenes and the loyal

followers at the front of the Comic-Con queue all feel, it's a sense of gratitude for some of the most inspiring tales the comic book industry has known.

We can't wait to see how the full suite of anniversary covers interact with each other, and the incredible pieces by Stuart, Chris, Nick and Clay are already testament to the legacy the series has created over the past 50 years. "It's an honour to count a piece I drew alongside those guys," says Nick. And we're pretty sure that Professor Xavier would be proud. 

FAN ART

YOUR X-MEN ARTWORK

Here are a few of our favourite X-Men pieces that you've posted in the ImagineFX gallery...

Title: Gambit
Artist: Kareem Ahmed
Gallery: www.bit.ly/ifx-avalonfilth



Title: Psychic Burn
Artist: Matt Skipworth
Gallery: www.bit.ly/ifx-crimsonarts



Title: X23
Artist: Jodie Muir
Gallery: www.bit.ly/ifx-jodiemuir



Title: Sabretooth
Artist: Allen Michael Geneta
Gallery: www.bit.ly/ifx-allentotingski

Title: X-Men: The Animated Series
Artist: David Nakayama
Gallery: www.bit.ly/ifx-dnakayama



Why not join in the fun and showcase your X-Men artwork over at our gallery? Visit www.imaginefx.com and share your art today!

In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists

Humble beginnings The Star Wars

Before taking to film, the original escapades of Luke Skywalker and co were very different. Thirty years after George Lucas drafted out his original screenplay, The Star

Wars, Dark Horse is releasing an eight-part comic series based on these long-forgotten tales, with artwork by Mike Mayhew (read more on page 66). For the latest news visit www.darkhorse.com.



Hitting the books New design course

Singapore creative group Imaginary Friends Studios is launching a new diploma in Digital Design and Illustration, in partnership with 3dsense Media School and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency. The new course aims to prepare aspiring artists for the demands of the global media industry. You can find out more at www.imaginaryfs.sg.

How English Move over Captain Britain!

In case you missed the announcement on St George's Day, Eco Comics will be releasing Englishman, a brand new series that it believes will mark the first all-English comic book hero to star in his very own franchise. And the whole thing's eco-friendly too! Visit www.bit.ly/eco-com, for more information and updates.



Hatboy
by Vaughn Pinpin



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"It begins with me working up a theme and seeing how far that takes me down the rabbit hole"

Ash Thorp gets mixed up between being an artist and being, er, a big-eared mammal. See page 80

Weapons of the Gods

Decidedly DC Solid prop design is just as important as the characters who wield them, as Ashton Gallagher explains



It's always great to find out how things have fared for the artists we feature in our FXPosé gallery, which is why we were thrilled to hear that

Ashton Gallagher (whose artwork graced the pages of issue 74) has been working at NetherRealm Studios for the past year on its DC brawler **INJUSTICE: Gods Among Us**.

With focusing on mainly props and NPCs, Ashton was tasked with creating objects that fitted into the DC Universe while being creative and unique. "I felt that I had the freedom to really take any prop in any direction. Some props ultimately had a set path, but I was never discouraged from taking any idea to the next stage. Video games are very fast moving, so focusing on how a prop's silhouette looked was just as important as the tiniest visible detail."

Go to www.bit.ly/Ashton-Gallagher to check out Ashton's blog and artwork.



Eccentric characters like the Joker help bizarre contraptions to come to life.



Ashton took character personality and the various gameplay modes into account when designing each of the props.

© Warner Brothers and NetherRealm Studios

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+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



Algenpfleger

www.algenpfleger.deviantart.com

German artist Johannes Voß has been something of a rising star over the past few years, and one glance at his lavish portfolio explains why. With many pieces created for clients including Magic: The Gathering, Johannes' collection of fine works is bound to captivate and impress.



Lora Zombie

www.lora-zombie.deviantart.com

Her paintings may be bold and graphic, but don't be fooled into thinking this is a simple collection. Lora Zombie's work is many things all at once: we've got urban fantasy, underground grit and childhood madness, all beautifully topped off with dripping paint streaks and dreamy colours.



NanFe

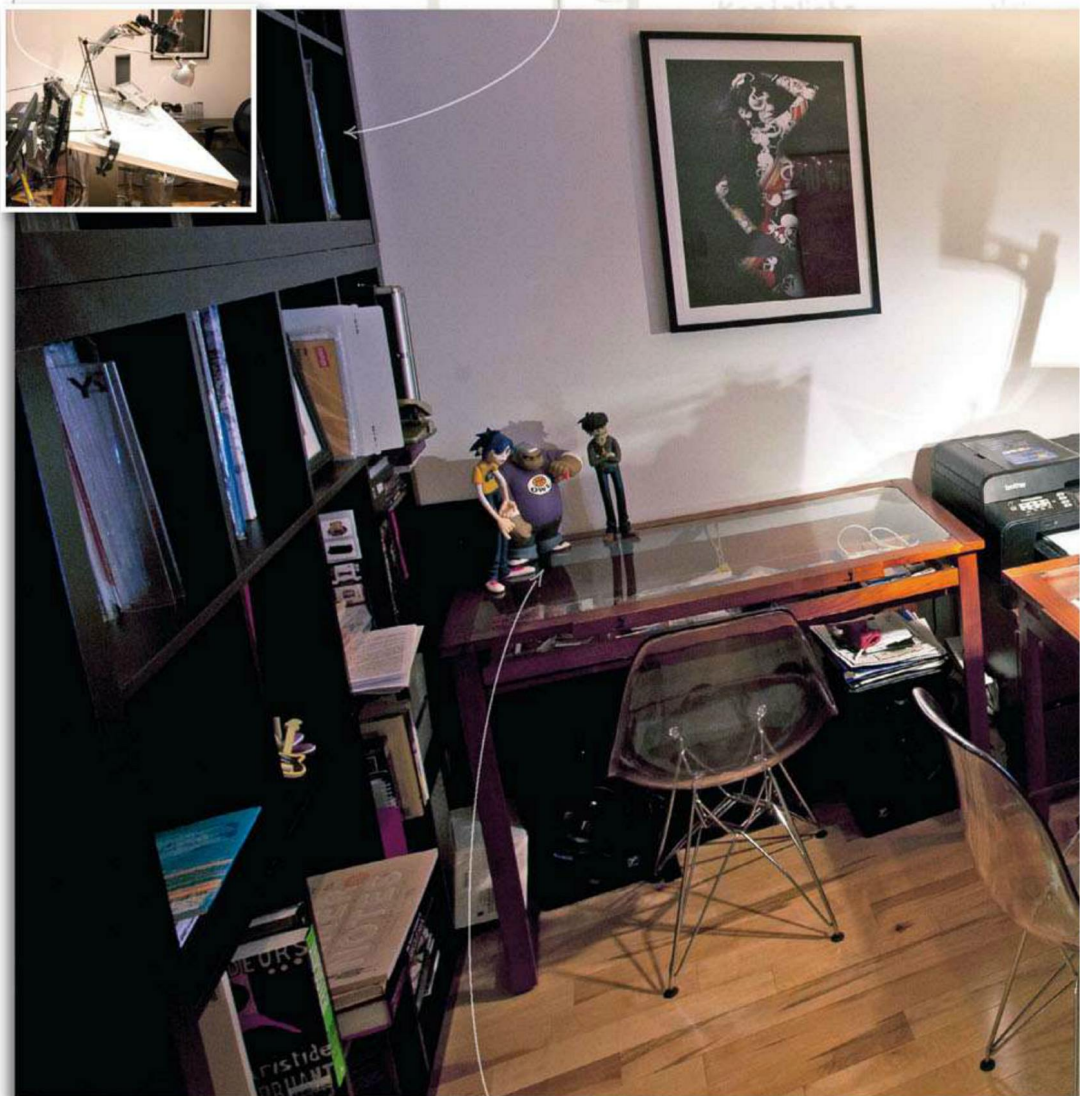
www.nanfe.deviantart.com

Dramatic, brooding, emotional and haunting – Vietnamese artist Hoai Minh wants your attention, and she's going to get it! Whether a flight of dark fantasy or an urban nightmare, it's Hoai's clever use of vibrant colour accents among grungy undertones that make her work stand out.

I prefer drawing most of my work traditionally on a drafting table before adding colour digitally.



The bookcases I've installed are great for defining the workspace while also maintaining privacy in an open concept living area.



Over on my digital side, I've got a full set of Gorillaz action figures for whenever I'm feeling a bit lonely.

Alvin Lee

Keeping calm Alvin's studio is a clever feng shui-friendly workspace optimised for productivity, creativity and ninja defence...



My studio setup is my dining room converted into a dual-desk configuration. This should explain the funky lights hanging over what's supposed to be a large dining table space.

I prefer having my studio in my home, because I like my workspace to be easily accessible whenever I'm feeling inspired. My routine usually consists of several hours of

couch and web surfing before I'm ready to get into any kind of groove, so having these things easily accessible is always nice. As an added bonus, I never have to deal with people in the mornings, thankfully, because I'm a horrible morning person.

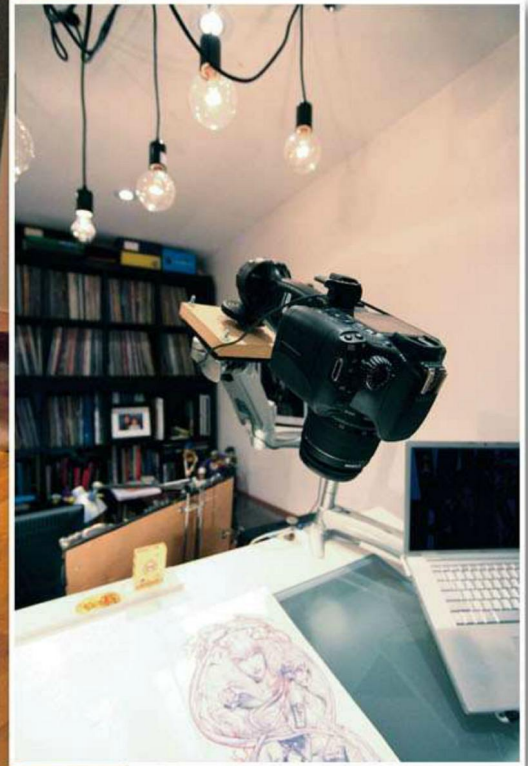
I start out drafting everything out on my drawing board before adding colour digitally. On the traditional side, all of my drafting tools such as Copic markers, blue

Artist news, software & events

My Buddha is supposed to promote happiness, but I do question his effectiveness every time I'm neck-deep in a deadline crunch.



The second arm of my Ergotron dual-arm has been rigged with a camera mount to a Rebel XTi, which enables me to capture process videos or time-lapse photos while I work.



I also have a fairly large mirror strapped to my desk lamp – not only because I'm vain, you understand, but because I find it's really great for studying expressions or lighting while painting faces.

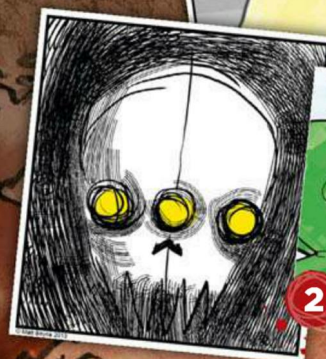
pencils and built-in light table are all within arm's reach. I do a lot of Google image referencing while occasionally keeping in contact with the rest of the world via social networking, so I decided to mount my laptop to my drafting table using an Ergotron dual-arm. The digital art setup has all of the toys you would expect. A Wacom Cintiq21UX, Brother A3 all-in-one scanner and a Mac mini maxed out with RAM.

I'm also quite superstitious when it comes to feng shui. Both of my desks face my preferred Kua positions and don't face any walls or windows. This has been suggested to easily view my surroundings while not having my back exposed to any lurking entities, such as ninjas. Logical or not, I'm willing to try anything to encourage a peaceful and auspicious work environment – including the placement of a Buddha in my bookcase to promote happiness.

Alvin has worked with major global comic publishers and media groups. Visit www.alvinleeart.com to see his art.



Photo by Kevin Green © Comic-Con 2012



PLANET OF THE ARTS



HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS: PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM. CHEERS!

Nicola

Nicola Henderson, Staff Writer

COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL: SAN DIEGO

Convention | US

1 The mother of conventions returns from 18 to 21 July. With the likes of Jim Lee and Adam Hughes on the guest list, it's going to be unmissable. www.comic-con.org

MANGA STUDIO COURSE

Course | England

2 ImagineFX comic regular Matt Boyce will be teaching a course explaining how to use Manga Studio to create vibrant comic artwork. See him from 27 June to 18 July. www.bit.ly/mangastudio-course

TOBIAS KWAN

Concept artist | US

3 Since appearing in issue 27, much has changed for Tobias. Along with many concept art and freelance projects, he's busy working on an intriguing project called Motherland. <http://tobias-kwan.blogspot.co.uk>

THE CONCEPTART.ORG WORKSHOP

Workshop | England

4 ConceptArt.org's renowned live workshops return to London, and Raphael Lacoste, Kekai Kotaki, and Michael Hussar will be there! www.conceptart.org



4



5



6



YEE LING CHUNG

Illustrator | Malaysia

5 Yee Ling works as a concept artist and illustrator, and is highly in demand. But she finds time to update her blog with WIPs, training images and observational pieces. www.bit.ly/ifx-ylchung

PABLO UCHIDA

Artist | Japan

6 Pablo started his own freelance business in September 2011, and with such a dynamic and expressive style, we're certain those commissions will keep rolling in. <http://pablocafe.seesaa.net>

SKETCH JAM

What can you make from a random selection of shapes and scribbles? Whatever you feel like!

CUP O' DOODLE

Cup O'Doodle

LOCATION: Online community. Must follow its blog to receive an invite

WHEN: Frequent – keep checking site

WEB: www.cupodoodle.blogspot.co.uk



Jesse Aclin's rainy cat started out as a kind of question-mark shape.



Petur Antonsson made a striking debut with his old mage lady piece.



A vague profile squiggle led leader Don Flores to create this charming piece.



Spontaneity can indeed inspire elegance, as Shishir Naik's mermaid piece demonstrates.

In true Japanese style, Dana Terrace transformed a simple stroke into something beautiful.



Map art by Jonny Doodle,
www.doodlebug.com

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Forum

Winners

Image of the month

The man with no emotion It's the height of comic convention season, and even the most cool-headed of characters can't resist a bit of cosplay...

Creating art based on the Star Trek character Spock always poses the extra challenge of capturing Leonard Nimoy's iconic profile.



IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Ryan really pulled off a dynamic composition in this original character mash up. This is straight-shooting illustrative work that hits the target."

Alastair Reid (harlequin)



With the San Diego Comic-Con just hovering over the horizon, many of us have been planning out those all-important cosplay costumes for months. Our forum users were no different, setting a challenge to depict an iconic character playing dress-up.

"When I saw that the theme of the challenge was a dressing-up contest, I was intrigued because I go to a lot of comic conventions and the idea of a famous character cosplaying as another seemed like a lot of fun," winner Ryan Kennedy explains.

"I chose Spock as a cosplayer because not only is he a super iconic character, but he also ended up in a lot of different costumes on different planets. So with this in mind, I chose to mix him up with a classic Clint Eastwood outfit, which felt like the right choice."

MYFX TITLE: Dress Up Time
WINNER: Ryan Thomas Kennedy (Ray)
GALLERY: www.bit.ly/ifx-ray
ALL ENTRIES: www.bit.ly/myfx-320

An important visual element was to recreate that shade of cowboy brown that we so closely associate Clint Eastwood with.



Clint Spockwood impressed the judges with an accurate costume and attitude to match. As many cosplayers say, it's all about the details!

Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx



MYFX TITLE: Big Red
WINNER: Jason Lee (Vektor)
GALLERY: www.bit.ly/ifx-vektor
ALL ENTRIES: www.bit.ly/myfx-march2013

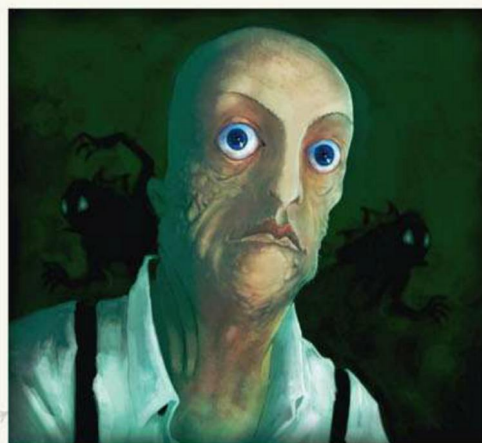
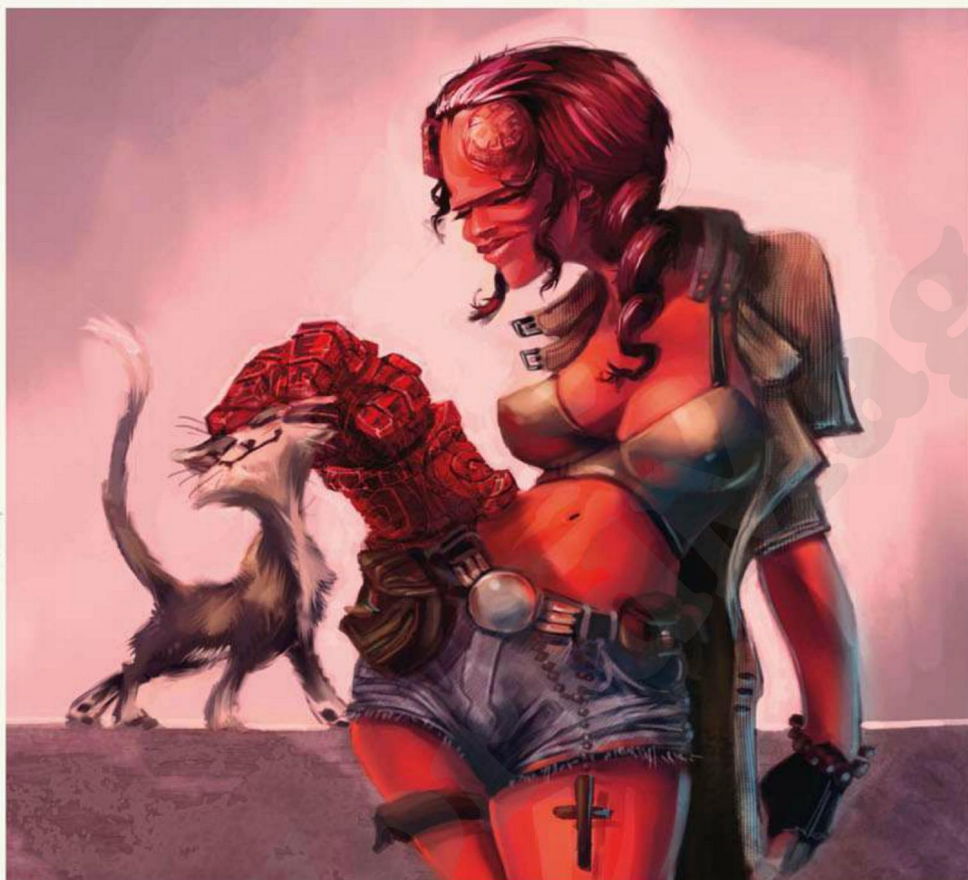


"It just so happened that I got to choose the theme for the March contest as well as participate in it. To me, Big Red sounded like an affectionate nickname you might give to something like a freakishly huge, futuristic locomotive, so that's what I went with. This was a tough one for all sorts of reasons: lighting, colour, perspective, depth cues, material effects and so on, and it wasn't the type of piece to tolerate deficiencies in any of those areas. Interestingly, it was the reference photo I used for the sky that brought it all together and helped me visualise those qualities. I think the various photo textures also helped to bring it to life."

MYFX TITLE: Hellboy's Perfect Pin-Up
WINNER: Matthew Grainger (Disco Matt)
GALLERY: www.bit.ly/ifx-discomatt
ALL ENTRIES: www.bit.ly/myfx-294



"I wanted to create a curvy female figure for this, pushing the hips and shoulders, but still keeping those iconic Hellboy features, even though it's applied to a girl. Since it's a Hellboy piece, there also had to be a cat involved and I think that's why this piece works - there's a bit of demon/kitty love going on between them. Painting the big hand was particularly fun, and I used tree bark pictures as a foundation for the texture. I wish I had a bit more time to paint a background, though."



MYFX TITLE: The Innsmouth Look
WINNER: Wayne O Connor (Doctor Dark)
GALLERY: www.bit.ly/ifx-doctordark
ALL ENTRIES: www.bit.ly/myfx-319



"The chance to render something related to HP Lovecraft could not be turned down - I'm a long-time fan of his stories and The Call of Cthulhu RPG. With this piece, my main approach was to adhere to the description and give the character a slightly 'off' look while at the same time not straying too far into making him a monster. As a final touch, I added the two Deep Ones in the background and the light Vignette border."

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, **Ian Dean**, on ian.dean@futurenet.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK



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Give him a break

I'm a concept artist and illustrator who's just starting out. Like the majority of beginners I'm trying to get my work out there and have as many people see it as possible. It would be amazing to have some of my work featured. Let me know if this is something you would be interested in. Thanks for your time.

Tucker Cullinan, via email

Ian replies: As you've asked so nicely, here's a painting by Tucker, and you can see more of his work at <http://tuckercullinan.com>.

What laptop?

I'm from Australia and was wondering about recommended laptops for digital/comic art (to be used mainly for colour work with a Wacom tablet). My budget is between A\$1,000 and \$1,500, give or take a couple hundred dollars. Thanks heaps – love the mag!

Rubin Herring, via Facebook

Ian replies: The obvious answer would be a MacBook Pro. They're made to run programs that are heavy users of RAM and video memory. However, I'd also suggest the Acer Iconia W700. Acer's new slate straddles both laptop and tablet categories and could be a nice solution. What do our readers think?

Online teaching

I found just recently how much I love art and have gone back to my love of drawing

(I haven't done anything for the past 15 years) and I'm already illustrating children's books for a friend. Now I'm seriously thinking of studying digital painting. So, what would be the best online course to learn all about it? Your answer would be much appreciated.

Tin Kerbell, via Facebook

Ian replies: Well, I wouldn't want to favour any particular companies but there are some that we've featured in ImagineFX over the years, such as Bobby Chiu's Imaginism Studios and SmART School, which is run by the Illustration Masterclass folks (Donato Giancola, Greg Manchess, Rebecca Guay and Eric Fortune). Or there are good single courses on Gnomon and CGMA to try.

Web of problems

I've been reading ImagineFX for two years and love the magazine. Every issue is full of inspirational content. I especially like issue 95's manga cover – I just sit and take it all in. However, I've been trying to use the forum recently and have found problems when trying to log on. Is this going to continue?

Annie Cross, via email

Ian replies: Thanks for reading, Annie, and I'm glad you loved the manga cover. Our new website is still in beta stage, but we have our droids working on fixing it! As you read this the forum should be up and running, with a new forum arriving in June.



Cover up

Your magazine is fantastic. It always has loads of quality artwork that inspires me no end. However, the quality of your covers seems to have taken a downward

turn. What I'm basically saying is, cover the girls up a bit. I love the magazine, but I want to see art on the cover, not cleavage! The cover of issue 94 I found to be quite repulsive and ugly compared to covers like issue 61, which are much more interesting. Thanks for hearing me out.

Benedict, via email

Ian replies: Hi Benedict. We try hard to ensure every cover we make is fresh and unique. We commission our own art and work with amazing artists to create a talking point each month. Doing this means walking a fine line between what the artist is known for, the issue's theme and the expectations of our readers. Of the last 10 covers, five have been females, one a male, one a dragon, a mech, a duo of superheroes (male and female)... and a Hobbit. What do other readers think? Voice your opinion and get involved with our issue 100 celebrations – tell us what your favourite cover is at: <http://vote.imaginfex.com>.

Early promise: reader Tucker Cullinan is just starting out as a concept artist and illustrator.



DID YOU MISS ISSUE 96?

We've still got a few copies, but you need to move fast! See page 61 for details on how to get hold of one.



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Ron, Ron, da do Ron, Ron

Thank you for the luxury of having Ron Lemen at my beck and call. I'm not running off to the shower with him, but rather it's nice to reach over for a helping hand with my anatomy painting and find what I need in these two special publications.

Ron's presentations are simple, to the point, and get me going in the right direction in no time. However, just as you think you've gotten all the information down, you're drawn back in and discover something new (or perhaps forgotten), because there's just so much there. Simply staring at one of his warm-ups often reveals more information.

Luckily I had some foresight to print off all the pages on the accompanying DVD because my two editions are falling apart from over use. Tell your readers, if they haven't picked up these special editions they're missing out big time. And don't keep them on the shelf gathering dust either – they're the best art instruction books out there!

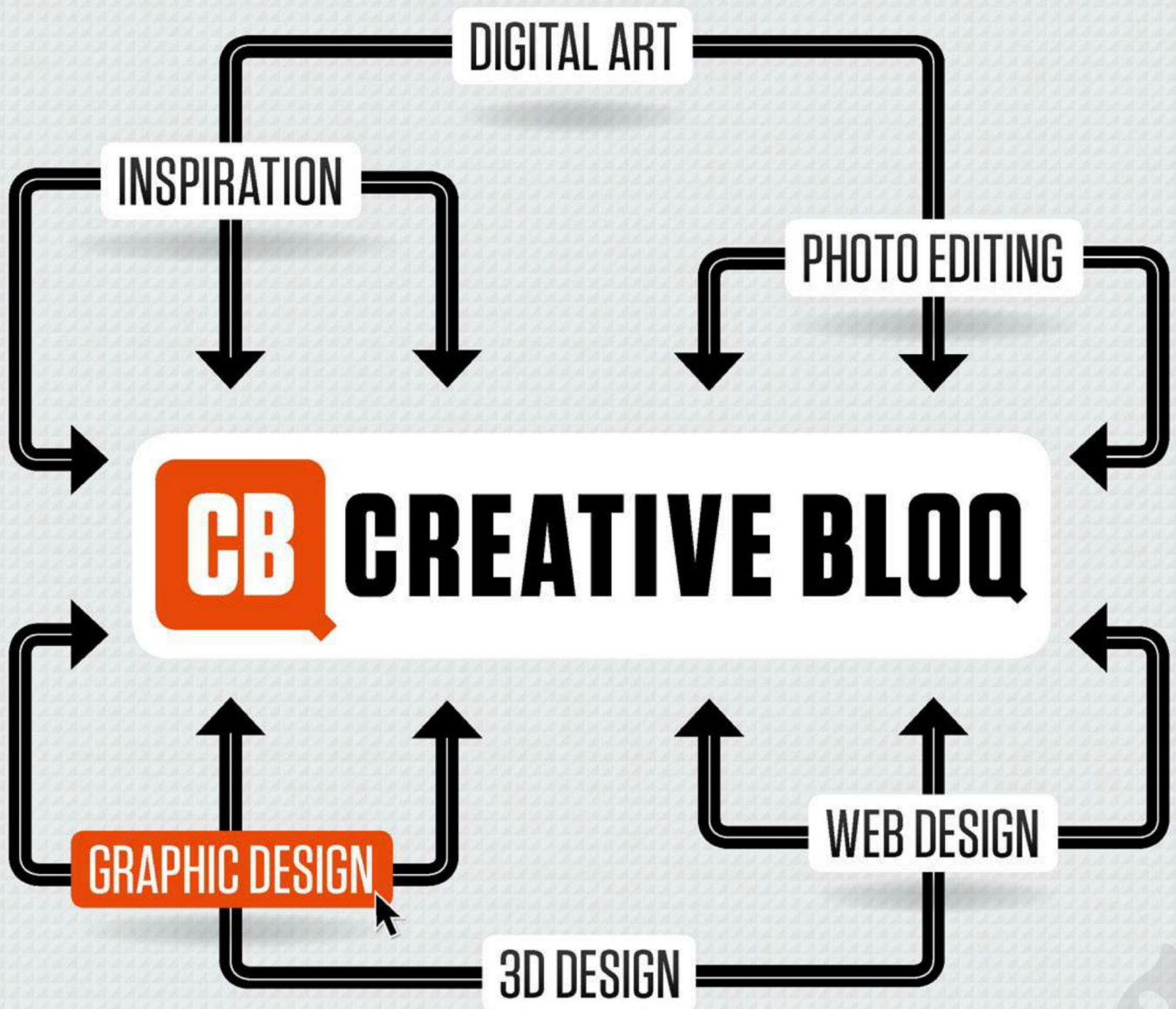
Alonzo Bartley, via email

Ian replies: I'm glad you liked the Anatomy specials we ran recently, and have put Ron down long enough to tell us! Ron worked tirelessly to ensure they were accessible and entertaining. Sadly, they've all sold out! However, you can pick up an app of the first book for iPad (www.bit.ly/ifx-anat) or order ImagineFX issue 94 from our website containing anatomy tutorials from the equally excellent Charles Hu.



If you missed Ron's Anatomy specials, issue 94 had more workshops on how to paint the body.

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Artist Q&A

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The FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX panel

Kinman Chan
Kinman studied at Gnomon School of Visual Effects, and has worked for Disney and Lucasfilm. He also owns Kincept Co.
www.sparetimer.blogspot.co.uk

McLean Kendree
An ImagineFX Rising Stars winner in 2011, McLean now works at Kabam studios, and has produced concept art for THQ, Hasbro and 38 Studios.
www.mcleanart.com

Mark Molnar
Mark is a concept and visual development artist. He's busy doing freelance work for international film, game and animation companies.
www.markmolnar.com

Paco Rico Torres
Paco is a freelance illustrator living in Spain who's produced art for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.
www.pacorico.blogspot.com

Nick Harris
Gloucestershire-based Nick went digital in 2000 after 18 years working with traditional methods. He works mainly on children's illustrations.
www.nickillus.com

Jace Wallace
Jace has freelanced for magazines, book publishers and produced concept art. He's since been hired by Maxis to do concept art for Sims 3.
www.wakkawa.cghub.com

Tony Foti
Tony is a US freelance illustrator who contributes to D&D, and Fantasy Flight Games' Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings lines.
www.tonyfotiart.com



Question
How do I make a character's face fit a specific personality type – can you help?

Kev Maxwell, Ireland

Answer
Nick replies



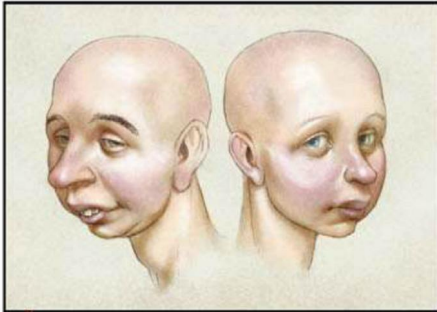
Various theories suggest that there are three base body types – ectomorph, mesomorph and endomorph, or equivalents – and possible character traits to go with them, but personalities vary much more than that.

Citing Darwin, some Victorian-era scientists suggested that criminality could be identified in people's faces (notably Cesare Lombroso, who came up with the theory of anthropological criminology). Studies have since dismissed his ideas, accepting limits on how much appearance tells you. That said, certain recognisable stereotypes have been propagated through film and other media.

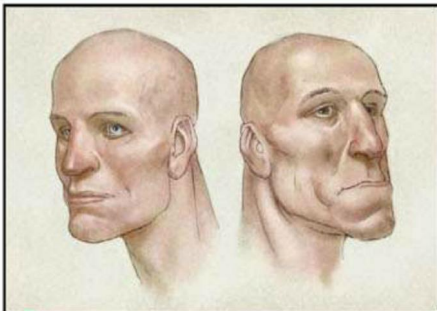
Artists have long used facial characteristics as a visual shortcut to reading the personalities of their figures.

My first artistic advice on this came from a book by animator Preston Blair, in which he explained some classic cartoon character traits. Cartoon and caricature are great to look at, with characters often matching their personality according to established traditions. If not, it may be for comedic or dramatic effect. Typical examples include a weak jaw line indicating a timid character, and a strong jaw line for a heroic figure. A straight nose may identify upright/honesty, whereas a crooked nose the reverse. Small eyes and mouth indicate meanness. Such simplifications of reality serve as good starting points. However, it's the particular combination of features that can deliver an impression of personality.

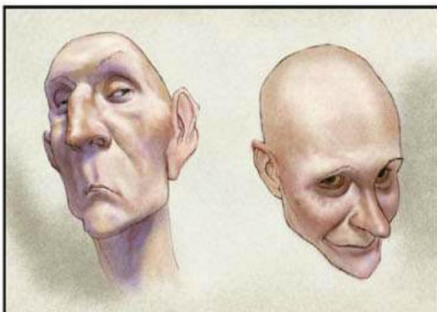
Step-by-step: Quickly define your character's personality



1 Both these faces have a small jaw and an overbite, but whereas the one on the left could be weak minded, the one on the right seems more vulnerable. It's the combination of all the elements that deliver the recipe for the personality. In addition, consider your character's posture, clothes, props and setting.



2 These examples have well-defined jaw lines, but the one on the right is exaggerated. It's also combined with a very low brow, along with blunter features that hopefully suggest lesser intelligence, possibly belligerence too. The more balanced features of the other face lean more towards strength and determination.



3 As well as the facial features, you can use the viewing angle to help you describe character. Here, both faces are thin faced, but looking up at the tight-lipped, squint-eyed character on the left makes it more obviously sinister than the higher eye-level, looking-down view for the one on the right.

Question

How do you show the difference between painting under natural and unnatural light?

Mitchell Hennessey, US



I always start an image with one light source. This is so I can easily adjust the other light sources' properties such as strength, colour and angle.

I paint the unnatural light source on a new layer as if it were just by itself. I can later use layer blending modes such as Screen to project this lighting on to the character.

Answer Jace replies



An unnatural light source along with natural lighting adds a dynamic element to any illustration. It gives you the opportunity to add depth, colour and value to what normally would be a static image. In this image, I'm going to demonstrate how the two styles of lighting work with and against each other using Photoshop.

Natural lighting comes from one of two light sources: the sun or the moon. With the sun, the lighting will cast shadows at a different angle depending on the time of day. The colours of surfaces will also vary. For example, while the sun is normally a warm colour, it differs throughout the day. In the morning, the light will be diffused and grey. In the afternoon, the areas cast with sunlight will have a warm yellow tone, and shadows will be sharp. At sunset, the colours will be orange, with shadows taking up more space.

The moon is generally cool. Shadows cast from the moon will be more diffused than daylight shadows. Colours from the moon's lighting are generally cooler, in that they'll range from grey, blue and purples. For this illustration, I chose the

moon to give an overall cool mood to contrast with the unnatural lighting.

Unnatural light can come from many different types of sources. These sources dictate how bright the light is, its colour, direction and focus. In this image of a sorceress the unnatural lighting aspect is going to be a fiery orb held up close to her face. The fire glows orange, to contrast with the cooler colours of the moonlight.

Artist's secret

ANGLE YOUR LIGHT

Unlike natural light, unnatural lighting may come from any angle. This is just one of the many differences I kept in mind while adding in unnatural lighting to the illustration. Its glow is only going to affect a small area with wildly different angles of shadows. This creates a nice focal point for the image to guide the viewer's eyes.

Question

Can you tell me how to paint a ripped, tattered flag?

Shawn Carter, US

Answer

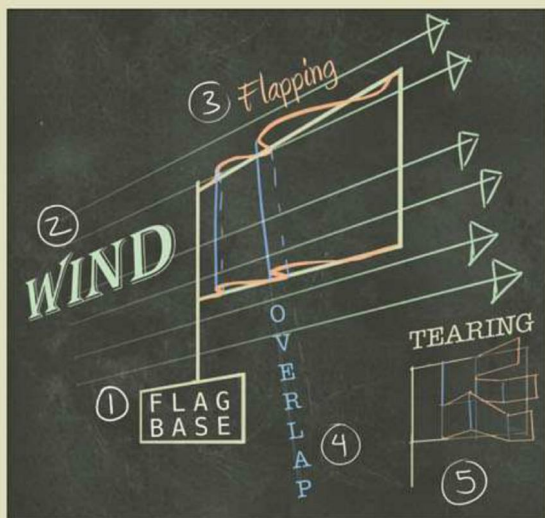
Kinman replies



Start with the flag base, which is the basic rectangle that determines where the flag sits in space. We want this to be in a perspective that's relative to the image environment. Then decide on the wind's direction.

This will influence the rest of the lines and details in the scene. As the wind presses against the flag itself, a ripple will begin to take effect as the material flaps in the breeze. Having the base as a reference point can help keep the scale and relative size of the flag in check. Bear in mind the overlapping material: defining the flaps over each other will give a sense of depth and form to the flag. Finally, as big pieces of the flag are torn up and divided, each section will become independent of the main form, becoming a mini flag in itself.

Of course it's not necessary to paint the flag scene in this particular order, but I recommend keeping these ideas in mind, as they'll help. Add a few holes, a symbol of some sort, light the thing, and you're all set!



These are the basic elements of a tattered flag to consider when in the drawing phase.



This is my rendition of the flag elements painted up and placed into a suitable scene.

Question

How can I use cast shadows to pick out characters or details in a group?

Sarah Jenkins, England



In this scene the lighting is even on the giant, cow and cowherd, and as such lacks the drama it could have.



Using a shadow across all three figures means I can silhouette the giant against the light background, making him look imposing.

Answer

Nick replies



In case you aren't sure what a cast shadow is, imagine an object sitting on a flat surface with a strong light coming from one side. The shadow would be cast away from the object on to the surface away from the light.

This is all pretty simple stuff, but cast shadows can be useful for all sorts of things. Here are just three examples: describing the shape of something it falls across; suggesting something that's not even visible in the image; and dividing up a composition into areas that help suggest

depth/perspective. They can be as simple or complex as you want.

One classic and dramatic example is an interior scene lit through a window with a venetian blind, beloved of film noir lighting directors of the 1940s and 50s. Stripes everywhere! To pick out any detail, including characters or objects, is simply a matter of ensuring the chosen focus forms an area of contrast, either light to dark or vice versa. Effectively, this forms a contrasted light or dark silhouette. How creatively you choose to do that is up to you and the specific scene limitations.

Question

Can you tell me how to integrate my character with their background?

Peter Finchurch, Canada

Answer

Paco replies



To achieve this, you need to pay attention to light, colour and perspective. The light will probably come from above, so you need to paint your character illuminated from above, and consider that he will cast a shadow around his feet. The colour palette of the background will affect the figure, so for a red background you'd need to put a bit of red on the colour mix when painting the figure. Finally, the perspective should match, so don't paint a figure viewed from below in a background with a high point of view!



Question

I'm having trouble incorporating a neon glow in my character art without it looking too clichéd. Help!

Tara Bennett, US

Answer

Tony replies



The key to painting anything that glows is keeping in mind that it's not a form, but a light source that illuminates other forms. In Photoshop, a neon effect can be created in a few simple steps. Your first order of business is to draw the shape of your light source with a high value pastel colour – in this

case it's the runes and magical markings on the sorceress' face.

Duplicate the layer, lock it, and fill the copied light source with a high saturation, lower value colour of your choice. Light orchestrates colour in the environment, and as such is often one of the highest points of saturation. Move the copied, high-saturation layer beneath the original and unlock it once again. Still using this layer, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. Adjust the radius to see how it changes the intensity.

The glow's character is dependent on the atmosphere. On a clear night the halo will hardly be visible, but once the fog rolls in everything changes. Thick atmosphere, such as fog, dust, smoke, dry ice or steam, will soften the edges of almost everything in the scene, and droplets of water in the air absorb some light. Basically, the more you want the neon glow to stand out, the thicker the air should be.

To avoid the clichéd look, make sure that the light is moving through the scene. Nearby objects, such as the sorceress's cloak and the smoke rising, will all be affected by it, and painting in those effects will tie the piece together.

Glowing objects can act as a strong unifying element in a composition. Both the light and colour they give off bounce throughout the whole piece.



Artist's secret



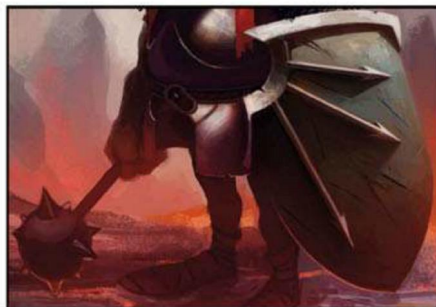
KEEP IT MOVING

Alternating the intensity of the glow can move the viewer's eye through your piece, and because they're light sources you can experiment with colours. Copy, paste, and dim layers to amplify and subdue the effects.

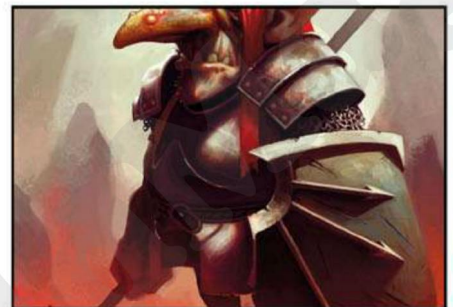
Step-by-step: Tie a scene together



1 Start by painting the figure with a light matching the background. In this case the light comes from above so I have to paint the figure accordingly. It's important to visualise the scene in your mind before starting to paint, so that you're confident on what objects will cast a shadow, and in which direction.



2 I feel that the light that emanates from the molten lava in the ground needs to have a greater effect on the figure, so I paint with dark red on a Screen mode layer, and a not-so dark red on a Soft Light mode layer, to create that warm glow that makes the whole scene look more natural.



3 I give a final touch of chromatic coherency to the scene by using a colour adjustment layer, which helps to make the colours of the character and background more homogeneous. I make the light slightly more green and the shadows more red to increase the influence of the background on the character.

Question

Any tips for painting a character in a dangerous situation?

Art Harris, US

Answer

Kinman replies



If we want to bring a sense of danger to a piece, it's best to understand what makes something visually dangerous

before we begin to paint. Furthermore, the real trick to creating any believable image is by having the ability to think it through.

Start by exploring the subject, I've chosen rock climbing. What I'd want to show for danger while climbing are a sense of height,

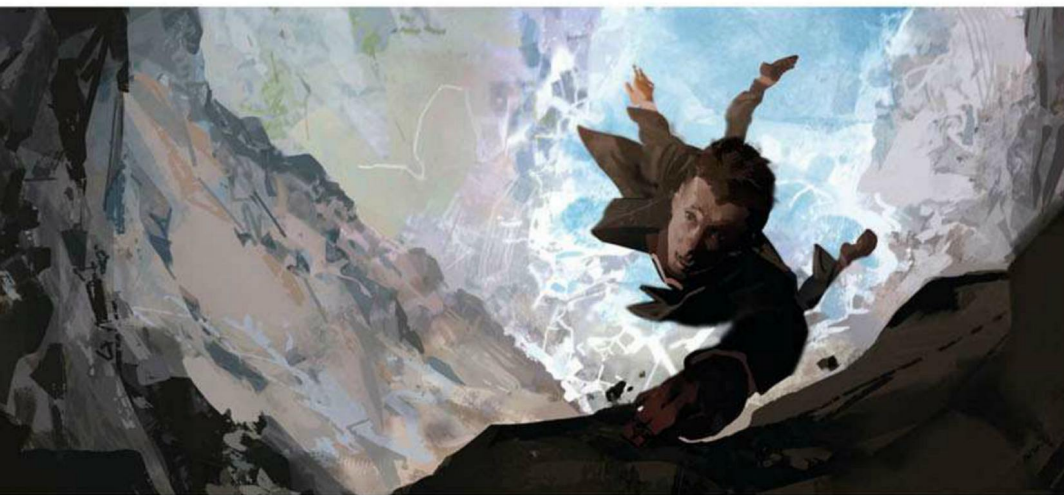
and maybe a sense of vertigo. Climbers may face the challenge of an impossible path or the memory of a failed attempt. Then there's the story. What about the characters in our piece? Are they battling? Maybe someone sneezed? Was it a joy ride gone wrong? The premise will set a different stage.

Don't forget to obtain reference material. Sometimes it's just a detail in a photograph that can sell the idea we want clearly.

A guy desperately hanging on is the easiest and most direct solution. I've emphasised a sense of vertigo and height to add tension.

Alternatively, it may be the crop or the vast landscape that becomes intimidating. Reference never fails to spark ideas.

In each of these areas, I've found it's a good idea to think about which camera angles, points of view, types of lighting, graphic shape breakups, line work and edges communicate a dangerous threat. For my piece I keep it simple. A guy hanging on for dear life works when all else fails.



Step-by-step: Place a character in jeopardy



1 Before I begin painting the final piece, I first want to become familiar with the subject matter. Scouring the internet, I look for some examples of how photographers tell the same story in real life. But rather than simply grab the photos, I produce a few quick studies and different views of rock climbers as they deal with this kind of danger regularly.



2 After studying what's available in real life, I can now free myself up. I do a quick abstract painting, throwing a few brushstrokes together, finding interesting shapes and randomly dialing around the Hue/Saturation wheel to add a bit of mood. There are no set rules for this part of the process – my only goal is to simply find the potential for a good piece.



3 Next, I want to make sense of what I've just cropped in on in my scene. During this stage I spend a fair bit of time figuring out how the mood and character work together, trying as much as possible to stick to the original shapes that sparked my attention. The perspective is fairly one-point, so I can think of the whole image as looking down a vertical tunnel.



4 With the help of a few more relevant references and the luxury of time, I can keep taking this piece to the degree of finish and polish that I want. This is the stage where all the elements come together. I have a pretty good idea of what to paint next, as long as I adhere to my perspective grid, draw carefully, and stick to my key shapes from the abstract portion from my initial sketch.

Question

Can you give me some advice on achieving a balanced colour scheme?

Francis Buchanan, US



While the main image has a lot more than the two complementary colours, the overall palette is limited to red and green.

Answer

Jace replies



Your chosen colour scheme is one of the most important aspects of an illustration. It not only sets the mood and direction, but can sometimes make or break the final work. There are many different types of colour schemes to choose from and each one has its benefits and shortcomings. I'll go through some of my favourite colour schemes and give a more detailed explanation of this image of a faerie painted in Photoshop.

One of my favourite colour schemes is the accented neutral colour scheme. This is when an illustration is made up of mostly neutral colours, such as grey, blue and brown, with a concentrated

bright accent colour such as red. This is a very strong scheme that grabs the viewer's attention and can introduce a surreal aspect to the image. However, while very effective I've found that this scheme is very limited in its colour selection, which can hurt an image.

Another favourite of mine is the complementary colour scheme that I use in this example image. A complementary colour scheme is two colours that are separate each other on the colour wheel. In this example I chose red and green. It's important to keep in mind the relations of colours in complementary scheme and how they affect each other. There will always be a warm and cool colour while choosing this scheme.



When a warm colour is sitting next to a cooler colour it'll appear to be in the foreground, pushing it in the front in a three-dimensional fashion. So to keep a strong focus on the character I give her lots of warm reds to push her into the foreground.

Question

How can I suggest a dream scene through my use of colour?

Francois Maneval, France

Answer

Mark replies



One technique is to use colours that you rarely see in the real world.

The key is to separate out the palette that you plan to use from those you see in daily life, but maintain a relation between them so that your art still looks believable within this imagined world.

In this example I shift my colour palette so that it features faded yellowish greens as the base, instead of the blues of a natural aerial perspective, which is what we'd see in the real-world version of a mossy landscape. After establishing the composition I introduce a different colour to break the harmony of the almost monochrome image, which helps to create the strange mood I'm after. I keep an 80-20 ratio between the two colours, so the image remains balanced despite the unusual colour choice.



To achieve the strange mood of this dreamy environment I use an unconventional palette that features more unnatural colours.



With using drastically different hues and saturations alongside each other you can easily create otherworldly colour palettes and moods in your paintings.

Question

When should my characters be placed flat against a background?

Steve Horranks, England

Answer

Tony replies



"Art is what you leave out," they say, and sometimes the best way to strengthen the main focus in your scene is to just get rid of everything else. The fewer elements you can use to get your point across, the stronger your final image will be. Sometimes, of course, the client just wants you to paint everything from every chapter into that one cover image, but then there's the breaks.

By using a flat colour for the background and then deemphasising specific objects of the same hue (or completely removing them, as I have here with the blue of her dress), you bring all of that attention to a few important spots. Artists such as Coles Phillips and John Whitcomb spent a large part of their careers experimenting with this strategy.



A simple composition means you can spend more time on the focal point. There isn't a whole lot more for people to look at, so pull out all the stops.

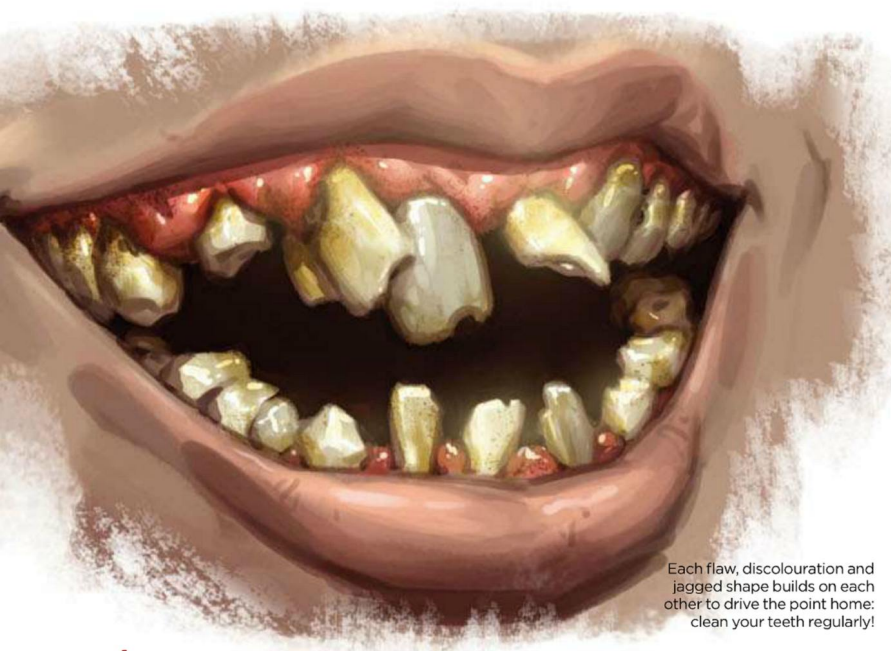


If your piece looks too simple, background elements can be used to flesh out some of those undefined areas.

Question

I'd really like some tips on drawing terrible teeth please!

Hank Stevens, US



Each flaw, discolouration and jagged shape builds on each other to drive the point home: clean your teeth regularly!

Answer

McLean replies

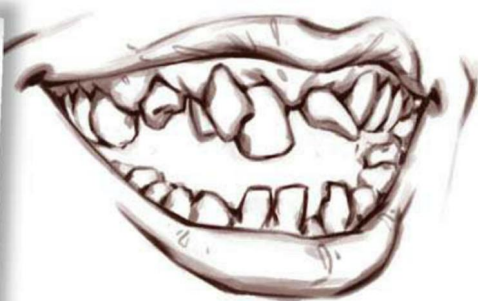


The first thing I do is to track down references online to help get my ideas rolling. Just a little time spent surfing the internet helps me brainstorm ways to shape, break, discolour and arrange teeth in all the worst ways possible. There are a lot of grim photos out there...

What kinds of things can go wrong with teeth? Are they discoloured and yellowed from smoking and never brushing? Are there broken teeth? Are the gums swollen or inflamed? Is there plaque? Are they irregularly spaced? On the other hand, it may help to figure out what makes teeth look good. Once you decide what the qualities of good teeth are, you can actively avoid them when making a lumber pile out of someone's mouth.

I find it's helpful to be mindful of not only your goal, but also what you don't want to draw. As with most images, I start with a loose sketch and then lighten and draw on top of it until I'm happy with it. I have my reference up the whole time – never to copy from, mind, but to help me be open to ideas. At this stage I'm pushing for big contrasting shapes, and if I can keep some of the teeth in line, the other ones would look even more messed up in comparison.

Once my line drawing is where I want it, I paint into it. This is the stage where I use colour to make my point. Darkened yellowed teeth meet with reddened, inflamed gums. During the painting stage I can also reinforce the different planes of the teeth, and explore textural options to really add some grit.

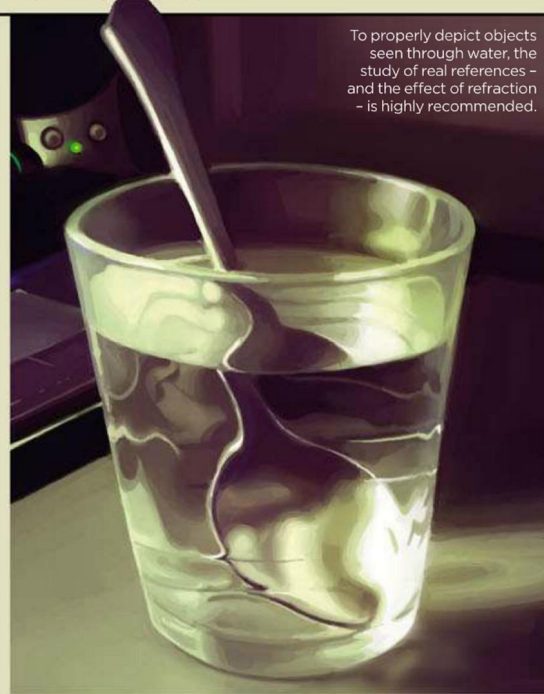


Focusing on the drawing stage will help iron out problems before getting too far. If at any point during the painting I'm having trouble, it's usually an error during this stage.

Question

What do I need to know about refraction when painting water?

Bryan Reyes, Philippines



To properly depict objects seen through water, the study of real references – and the effect of refraction – is highly recommended.

Answer

Paco replies



Refraction is when an energy wave (in this case, light) changes its direction because of a change in the medium that it's travelling through. We can see this because our eyes can 'catch' the light that bounces in the objects around us. If there's nothing but air between us and the object that we're watching, the waves of light travel on a straight line direct to our eyes, so we see the object as it is. However, if there's something transparent between us – something that enables the light to pass, but changes its direction (such as water) – then we'll see a distorted image of the object, because the light waves don't arrive to our eyes on a direct straight line.

Essentially, this is what refraction does. Refraction is key when trying to paint water realistically because water refracts light. Obviously, this is only of major importance when we can see through the water. If you're trying to paint dark or dirty water, reflection will be a factor of importance greater than refraction.



If I had painted the spoon without being distorted by the effect of refraction, it would look strange and not at all realistic.

Artist's secret

A SENSE OF LIGHT

Sometimes I'll create a light layer (with reduced opacity) and use a radial gradient to create the effect of light bouncing off the brighter elements in my pictures. In this case I made bounce light radiate out from the teeth, which is noticeable on the darkness of the mouth.



Question

How can I paint metal that looks like it's been through the wars?

Bethany Rivera, Malaysia

Answer

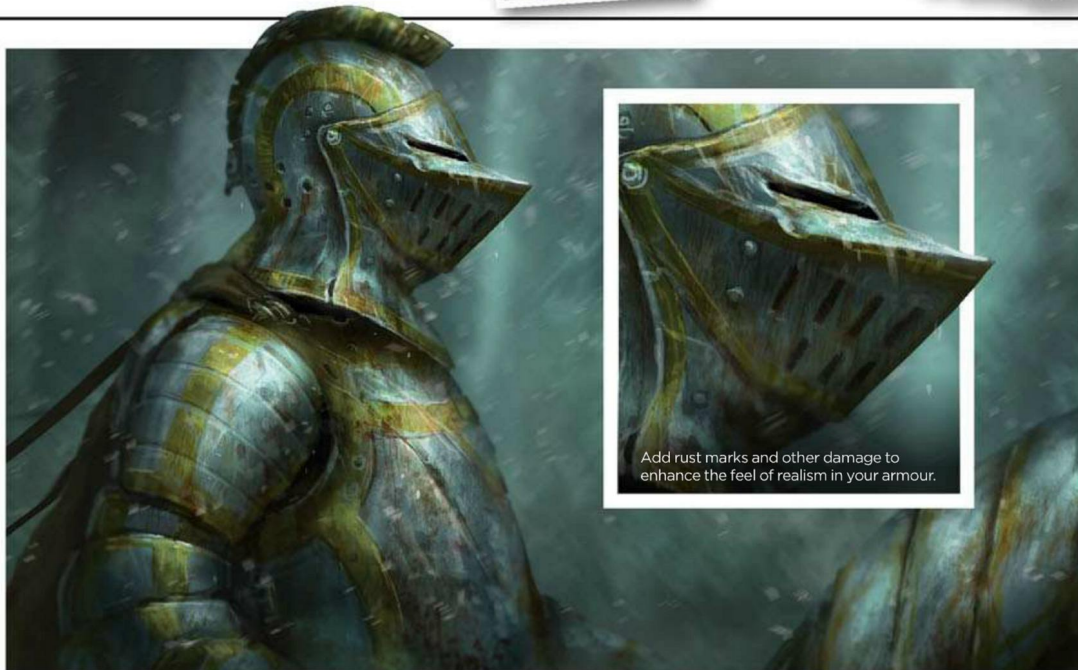
Mark replies



The best way to design a worn medieval or fantasy armour is to simply design how it looked originally and then add all the marks and damage associated with wear and tear. Think about the differences between the surface quality between new and worn armour. New armour is pristine and shiny, the edges and its general silhouette is clean and sharp, and the flow of the shapes is well balanced. In contrast, the surface of the worn armour is much more matte and irregular, the silhouette and outline is uneven and broken in places, with battle damage being evident.

I keep all this in mind when I design the armour. I use some real medieval suits of armour as references, but try to include some disharmony in the shape language from the very beginning. After I have the overall direction blocked in with the main reflections, highlights and shadows, I start to add battle damage to the surface.

I always try to create a backstory for my characters and costumes, because this is what brings the piece with life. I imagine that this knight is heading home after a fierce battle. Swords and pikes struck him on his chest plate and helmet, and the blood of his enemies is splattered all over the suit. Then I try to go back even further in time, when he was probably rushing through the forest the day before, which is where all the small scratches came from. And what could be the story of this armour? He probably inherited it from his



Add rust marks and other damage to enhance the feel of realism in your armour.

The best way to paint worn armour is to show all the surface damage and corrosion. Know the story behind the character you're painting and tell it through scratches, minor dents and discolouration.

father – that's why it has more rust marks. This is not the first winter that the suit of armour has seen...

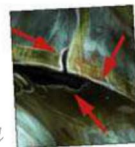
By the time I've gone through the story, I've pretty much finished the design. I've laid down the foundation, so from this point on it's just a matter of time to add more polish and realism to match the desired level of quality.

Because I want to keep it more like a rough key frame or mood concept, I add some cinematic effects and blurs, doing some final adjustments in the colours and contrast and then call this design done.

Artist's secret

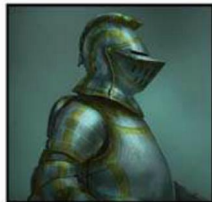
METAL HIGHLIGHTS

Add more realism to your metallic materials by adding highlights to the edges of the shapes. The glossy materials tend to reflect the surroundings more on their edges because of the distortion of the light. You can also find more scratches and damage here, which creates even more reflections.



Step-by-step: Paint a battered suit of armour

1 Begin by blocking in the main silhouette with a darker colour. Then with the Lasso tool I define the separate armour plates. I use a simple Soft Round brush on a new Overlay layer to apply the



highlights and the soft reflections of the surroundings. I then add the yellowish markings on another Overlay layer to suggest more details.

2 Now that I'm happy with the overall appearance of my suit of armour, I can now begin to add the first pass of worn and physical damage to the surface. I make the silhouette and the edges of the



shapes more uneven and add fine highlights and scratches. I try to further break up the various armour plates and add areas of dark shadows.

3 Add fine, desaturated rough metal textures on Overlay and soft light layers to unify the general look of the armour and start to paint the corrosion and extra details on top. By adding dried blood



splatters and rust marks I both bring extra depth to the character's story, and improve the colour palette of the piece by making it richer and older looking.

Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at help@imaginefx.com or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**



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MAKING AN IMPACT
Artist Alex Ross's interpretation of the Man of Steel is a fan favourite.



MEANWHILE,
SUPERMAN HAS
A JOB TO DO!

FLYING HIGH
The popularity of
Superman means that
he continues to be one
of DC's most successful
comic characters.

THE ART OF SUPERMAN

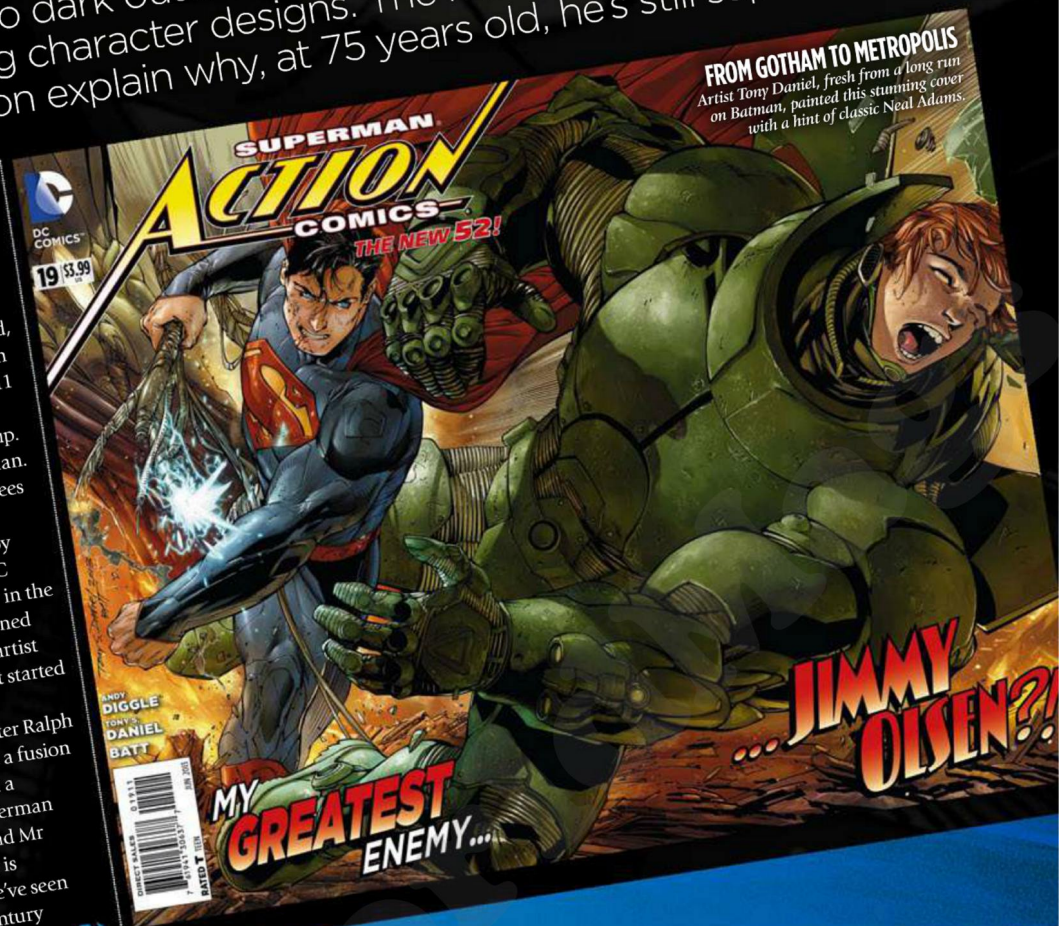
From daring exploits to dark outsider, Superman has proved to be one of comic's most enduring character designs. The leading artists behind the Man of Steel's evolution explain why, at 75 years old, he's still super



There are few real comic icons, but Superman is arguably the most recognisable comic character in the world. He's been a regular fixture for DC Comics ever since two kids from Cleveland, Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, created him in 1938. When DC revamped its titles in 2011 as the New 52, it was evident the Man of Steel would play a major role in the lineup.

2013 is an important year for Superman. Apart from his 75th anniversary, June sees another attempt to kick-start a film franchise with Man of Steel, directed by Zack Snyder (300, Watchmen) and DC knew it had to keep Superman firmly in the public attention. So it brought renowned Scottish writer Grant Morrison and artist Andy Kubert to recreate the title that started it all, Action Comics.

Reading Grant and Andy, and later Ralph 'Rags' Morales' efforts, you can see a fusion of classic Man of Steel stories with a contemporary twist. Popular Superman adversaries such as Lex Luthor and Mr Mxyzptlk are used but their take is refreshingly different to what we've seen before, reimagined for a 21st century audience. It seems that fans have really



FROM GOTHAM TO METROPOLIS
Artist Tony Daniel, fresh from a long run on Batman, painted this stunning cover with a hint of classic Neal Adams.

THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

Lois & Clark
On the Job!



“Between ego, history and satisfying the public you get there. The key is to make it both familiar and new”

connected with what Grant and his artistic collaborators have come up with. “Any time you try to do something that’s been done before, I believe you need to go



back to the roots,” Rags tells us. “Adding your own element is fundamental and so outside of imagining specific types to fit

the mould, the composition is always a ‘feeling around’ process. You as the artist know what you’re looking for, but it has to evolve. Somewhere between ego, history and satisfying the paying public you eventually get there. The key for this kind of thing is to make it familiar and new at the same time.”

JUST KIDDING

Rags gave his approach to Superman a great deal of thought. “I remember having treasury editions of comics as a kid. My



FRONT PAGE NEWS

Superman has always been associated with Metropolis newspaper The Daily Planet, as seen in Kevin Novolan’s cover art.

A SUPER COUPLE
Lois and Clark have been interpreted by many artists over the years and here we see Kevin Novolan’s 1995 rendition.



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JUNE 04

SUPERMAN



TO BOLDLY GO

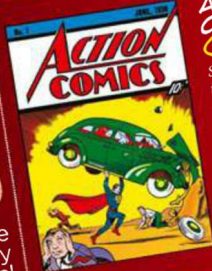
Jim Lee’s first portrayal of the Man of Steel back in 2004 was a bold and distinctive design.

hope was to bring forth the feelings I got as a kid from that treasury edition. Following the lead from Joe Shuster that John Sikela and Jack Burnley took, but ending before you got to Wayne Boring and Curt Swan, was my objective. It’s not at all about imitating someone, but rather doing an impression. The elements of the story itself play a part in it and help the evolution. But in the end it’s about latching on to an era and dressing it up in today’s clothing.”

The look of Superman has been altered over the years, but Rags took a cross-section of different source materials to come up with his take on the character, some going back many years. “Superman was intended to always be the ‘man of tomorrow’, so such an archaic ideal didn’t last. But something Herculean, or Paul Bunyan-esque about the character is the most important and appealing aspect to me and that was the impetus of my design. So with that in

SUPERMAN MILESTONES

Comics, TV, film... the superhero has certainly evolved over the years!



ACTION COMICS #1 (1938)

Superman’s first appearance in June 1938 is probably one of the most famous covers that’s ever been published in comic history. Its design has been parodied and satirised over the years by a variety of other titles. It’s also considered by comic historians as heralding the start of the superhero genre.

SUPERMAN #1 COMIC (1939)

In summer 1939, because of the runaway success of Superman’s appearance in Action Comics, the character was given his own series. This was the first time a comic company had published a title devoted to a single character. The cover to Superman #1 is almost as iconic as the cover to Action Comics #1.



SUPERMAN TV SERIAL (1948)

Kirk Alyn starred as the Man of Steel in a series of movie instalments. There were 15 episodes, recounting Superman’s origin and pitted him against his most well-known adversary, Lex Luthor (Lyle Talbot). It featured an alternate dimension, which prefigured the Phantom Zone of the comics by 11 years.

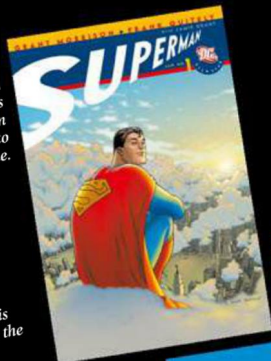
THE ART OF SUPERMAN

BREAKING THROUGH
After reinventing Batman, superstar artist Neal Adams turned his attention to DC's other iconic creation with this cover to Superman #233 way back in 1971.





THE SCOTTISH CONNECTION
Artist Frank Quitely's Superman was an instant hit, thanks to his unique style.



A QUIET MOMENT
The interplay between Lois and Clark (left) provides the emotion in this page by Tony Daniel and Batt.

QUITE FRANKLY

DC took a risk and gave Superman to one of comic's more experimental artists. It proved a surefire smash...



Back in 2005, DC took a big chance by launching All-Star Superman, a series written by Grant Morrison and drawn by Frank Quitely, both Scottish comic creators who were best known for their more surreal work for DC's Vertigo imprint. But their instincts were correct as the series was an instant hit. Grant brought something fresh to the portrayal of Superman while still remaining true to Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's vision, and Frank's art was bold but accessible.

The pair used many of the familiar Superman supporting cast such as Lex Luthor and Lois Lane, but revamped them for a new audience. Frank's take on Superman was revolutionary, yet simple at its core: "Basically I started drawing Superman the

way I imagine him in my mind. That's a Curt Swan-based Superman. It's a mixture of lots of different artists but it's that kind of classic 1960s Superman.

"After concentrating on what my image of Superman was, I then had to draw a Superman that I could do without any reference. This meant it looked like one of my characters because there's that family resemblance with my characters, which is a trait I see in lots of other artists as well.

"The main thing [when drawing him] was in the body language and facial expressions. Grant was very insistent that he should look not just benign, but benevolent. He should be super relaxed physically and socially, because he's virtually invulnerable and he's filled with goodness, so he wouldn't feel the need to make the typical superhero posturing."

mind, I incorporated a Steve Reeves physique, Elvis Presley charm and voilà, here's my Superman. When Grant Morrison wanted to go back to basics, I was absolutely thrilled. That's my kind of Superman," Rags says.

As with all of Grant's work, his interpretation of the Man of Steel fuses a classic approach with a starkly

and tribulations, hangs on to the better ideal, optimistically looking at the glass that's half-full. It's his most admirable quality, and some fans believe it's been lost. They see the things that Grant and I did and say, 'Superman wouldn't threaten...' and say, 'Superman wouldn't be so heavy handed,' but I believe they're clinging to the fully evolved character that they remember.

"The only way that I could shape him into my own was by drawing him – a lot. It can take a while..."

contemporary one, and Rags feels that at the heart of what makes a good Superman story is being able to address universal concerns. "As it is with any character, you need to address the human condition. Whether it's the hero or villain, we need to be symbiotic with the character. We all wake up with the intention of having a good day, to make an impression. I don't believe anyone wakes up and says, 'I want to suck today.' Superman, through his trials

They need to keep in mind that the end of the road is not here, and the Superman we presented is rough around the edges and intentionally so, I believe, on his way to becoming a matured hero."

Rags took over from Andy Kubert, who kicked off the New 52 Action Comics title. Andy, the son of legendary artist-creator Joe Kubert, had some very definite ideas about his take on the Man of Steel. "The only way that I could shape him

FLYING HIGH

Frank's run has been so popular that he's been asked to draw Superman for events like the Lille Comics Festival.



SUPERMAN FILM (1978)

The Man of Steel returned to the big screen three decades later with Christopher Reeve as the lead role. He refused to wear fake muscles, instead working out intensively for two months. It took \$134m at the US box office and three sequels followed. The actor's life ended tragically, becoming a quadriplegic after a horse-riding accident.

SUPERMAN #400 (1984)

It wasn't the first mainstream US comic title to hit this milestone, but it was the first devoted to a single character to do so. Accordingly, DC brought in art legends such as Roy Bradbury, Moebius, as Ray Davis, Jack Kirby, Jerry Robinson, Al Williamson, Jim Steranko and Steve Ditko to celebrate the momentous occasion in style.



SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL #1 (1986)

John Byrne, known for his work at Marvel on X-Men and Fantastic Four, gave the Last Son of Krypton a 1980s makeover. John redesigned his costume and scaled back his powers, and spent two years at the helm of DC's Superman line, including the 50th anniversary.



ACTION COMICS #600 (1988)

To celebrate the 50th birthday of Superman, DC put out a lavish anniversary issue of the title where the character got his start. John Byrne worked with writer and illustrator George Pérez to give the reader an epic tale of Superman teaming up with that other iconic DC creation, Wonder Woman.

THE ART OF SUPERMAN



**CONTEMPORARY
YET CLASSIC**
Frank is able to harken
back to the classic
Superman stories while
giving them a modern
slant at the same time.

VILLAINOUS INTENTIONS

Kenneth Rocafort's portrayal of Superman's nemesis Lex Luthor.



into my own is by drawing him – a lot," says Andy. "It takes a while to get a character to really come into his or her own for me. It's not just in the look, but in the acting and posture as well as facial expressions. I loved Curt Swan's Superman. It would be tough not to be influenced by that. I grew up

"It's not just the look, but the acting, posture and expressions too"



A NEW APPROACH
Tony Daniel tries to give his pages a different feel.



SUPERMAN #75 (1993)

DC killed off its most famous creation, garnering media attention around the world. It wasn't Lex Luthor who did it, rather Doomsday, a new creation. But of course, no one stays dead in comics...

SMALLVILLE (2001)

Telling the origin of Superman on television, Tom Welling stepped into young Clark Kent's shoes in a TV series developed by writers/producers Alfred Gough and Miles Millar. It ran for an impressive 10 seasons, ending in 2011. Throughout the series, a pre-superhero Kent was never seen in that iconic pants-and-cloak costume.

SUPERMAN RETURNS (2006)

Brandon Routh donned the costume in Bryan Singer's earnest take on Superman for the big screen, in an homage sequel to Superman II (ignoring events in III and IV). But it didn't capture people's imaginations and so Warner's attempt at resurrecting the franchise ended for the time being.

NEW 52 SUPERMAN (2011)

At the heart of DC since the beginning, Superman played a major part in the line's rebranding. Getting writer Grant Morrison on board, with Jim Lee redesigning the look and rethinking the Man of Steel's place in the DC Universe meant the spotlight was still very much on the character.



MAN OF STEEL (2013)

This summer sees Superman back in the media spotlight with another film adaptation. Director Zack Snyder (Watchmen) with producer Christopher Nolan (The Dark Knight) may have what it takes, but we won't know until June. Controversially, the new version doesn't wear pants over his tights.

SUPERMAN UNCHAINED (2013)

This is the second time that superstar artist Jim Lee has drawn Superman (he illustrated a run with Brian Azzarello back in 2004), but expectations are high for Superman Unchained. This is a new Superman comic written by Scott Snyder and drawn by Lee. It's also launching in June this year.

FACING OFF

Kenneth gets the chance to draw Superman in action with Supergirl.

brought him even more into the mainstream with his iconic film.

Superman has always been at the core of DC's line, ever since his first appearance in June 1938, and while his titles have been revamped countless times, the character has remained true to Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's idea of an outsider who fights for justice, influenced by the fact the pair came from Jewish immigrant families. Superman has reflected his times: he supported the war effort in the 1940s, and fought gangsters and other less-benevolent aliens who threatened Earth in the 1960s and 1970s.

PRESSURE POINT

The character has attracted the cream of comic illustrators over the years, yet his fame has lent extra pressure to anyone who's chosen to illustrate him.

For Richard Donner, director of the first Superman film, starring Christopher Reeve, there was a little extra pressure to bring such an iconic figure to the big screen, he admitted in an interview in

PUTTING ACTION BACK INTO COMICS

The New 52's Kenneth Rocafort is the latest artist to reinvent Superman for a new audience, although he's well aware of the pressure attached



Rocafort is just the latest creator to whom DC has offered this unique chance. Starting his career as cover artist on Superman before the New 52 relaunch, with the Hel on Earth crossover, he got the opportunity to draw the interior pages of the Man of Steel. In his 75th year, attention is focused even

more closely and Kenneth was very aware of the pressure on him as a Superman artist. "Drawing Superman is a big goal in the comic book industry and working on a character of this magnitude, there's a huge responsibility not to damage his colossal image," says Kenneth. "And that is what I'm trying to do while drawing, showing the respect and dignity this iconic character deserves." The pressure, says Kenneth, comes from the need to capture the attention of

Superman's many fans, who are more demanding every day. "As an artist you have to find ways to be innovative issue by issue, staying sharp on how to interpret and present an appealing visual script," he says. "At the same time, you have to battle with the pressure of the deadline. But it's very exciting to see the reaction of the spectator when they see the final product and the work receives positive reviews, which means the pressure was worth it."

THE ART OF SUPERMAN

DOWN BUT NOT OUT
Kenneth Rocafort has been given the opportunity to really stretch his artistic muscles on Superman in recent months.





STEELY DETERMINATION
Jim Lee returns to the character he last drew in his own book back in 2004, in *Superman Unchained*, a new title coming in June.

JIM LEE
WILLIAMS SMC



BOMBS AWAY
Frank Quitely had a unique approach to cover composition on All-Star Superman.



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE
Frank Quitely managed to channel the classic Superman while still offering his own distinct take on the character.

EARTHLY POWERS
Artist Shane Davis took a stripped-down approach to his collaboration with writer J Michael Straczynski on Superman: Earth One.

SUPERMAN UNCHAINED

Not one to duck a challenge, Jim Lee is busy breathing new life into the Man of Steel...



DC is using the 75th anniversary year to spotlight the Man of Steel and as of June, there'll be a new title to add to the roster. Superman Unchained, written by Scott Snyder and drawn by Jim Lee, has been receiving a lot of attention recently.

Jim has already redesigned Superman once, for JLA-Z, in which he broke apart the character and rebuilt him. "Unchained is a subtler approach. 'A celebration of all the things that make Superman so inspirational,' said Jim on WLNy. 'If there was only one Superman story that we could tell, this is it. It picks up on the high points of the character.'"

Former Batman writer Scott told the Nerdist website: "We're exploring the heroism of Clark as he sees fit, but the way Clark refuses to reshape the world as he sees fit, but instead allows us to do it ourselves. Ultimately, for me, this moral compass of his is what makes him sometimes feel alone. Not his heritage or power set, but his morals."

"It's funny commuting from Gotham to Metropolis," regales Scott. "The rain stops, the clouds part. It's sort of the Superman story I'd do if I only had one chance to write a Superman story. It's my version of a Superman story - it pits him against a brand new villain. You're going to see your favourite characters shown in very different, fresh ways. We really wanted to do a Superman story that shows him in ways you haven't seen before."

"I thought, what the f* are they doing to Superman? It's apple pie and ice cream and Americana"**

2001. "I was tweaked by the idea of Superman immediately. But then I realised it was going to be produced by some Hungarians whose office was in Costa Rica and directed by an Englishman in Italy. I thought, 'What the f*** are they doing to Superman? It's apple pie and ice cream and Americana. It's Norman Rockwell. It's 'don't tread on me'.' In a strange way I felt I've got to do this. The moment I got into it - read it - I felt, 'Oh man, what a challenge this is going to be.'"



The Man of Steel's enduring appeal is down to a number of reasons, says current Action Comics artist Tony Daniel: "Superman is not just an American icon, but a global one. When people think superhero it's hard for Superman not to be the first one that pops into their minds. Great stories and art will always keep a character alive, especially when you're dealing with the greatest superhero of all time."

Director Zack Snyder, whose Man of Steel hits the big screen in June, discussed Superman recently in an interview. "I wanted the movie to be a big movie-going experience, full of action, full of emotion and full of the biggest superhero in the world. I wanted to give to the cinemas of the world a big, giant 'movie' movie." Zack doesn't disguise his love of the Big Blue Boy Scout either. "I've been a big fan of the character my whole life. He is the greatest superhero. There's no competition between superheroes, but if there was, he'd win."

Despite the countless creators who've made their mark on the Man of Steel, after 75 years the public's appetite for the alien visitor shows no sign of abating. With the launch of Superman Unchained in June, a new series written by Scott Snyder and drawn by DC co-publisher Jim Lee, and Man of Steel in cinemas the same month, Superman will continue to be at the heart of DC's comic line. Happy birthday, big guy, and here's to many more.

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Issue 91 January 2013



In our Tolkien special we talk to artists John Howe and Alan Lee about making The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, while workshops feature Gollum, Eowyn's battle with the Witch-king, and Corrado Vanelli's Middle-earth elf queen. Elsewhere, Donato Giancola shares his treasured techniques.

Issue 92 February 2013



Combine 2D and 3D in your art, improve your backgrounds, mix up your fantasy genres, master backlighting... these are just some of the techniques that you can learn in this month's packed issue. We also talk to Adrian Smith and Edward Howard about their inspirational fantasy art.

Issue 93 March 2013



In our sci-fi special, Admira Wijaya designs believable mechs, Serge Birault paints a Barbarella pin-up, Clint Cearley creates a mechanical wizard and Nick Harris tries to put goblins in space with SketchBook Pro. We also have an interview with delightfully eccentric artist Ian Miller.

Issue 94 April 2013



Our workshop artists will give your anatomy skills a real boost this month. Cover artist David Gaillet, teacher Charles Hu and ex-Disney artist John Watkiss all endeavour to sharpen your figure drawing techniques. And Corrado Vanelli helps you depict better faces in Corel Painter.

Issue 95 May 2013



Manga and mechs make up a large portion of this month's cracking issue. Our workshop section will give you the skills to compose manga fight scenes and heroic characters, and explain the secrets of manga's masking techniques. And we discover what it takes to paint the perfect mech.

Issue 96 June 2013



Immerse yourself in the world of classic fantasy art with the help of John Stanko, who channels the skills of Frazetta to produce this month's stunning cover. Our workshop artists will also help you depict moving fabric, paint a magical forest and give your digital paintings a traditional feel.

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Sketchbook

Mike del Mundo

Most of Mike's down time consists of filling up his sketchbook with drawings of whoever's in his vicinity

**HORSE
POWER**

"Nuff said."

**JOHNNY
MARSHMALLOWS**

"I came up with this idea camping up north. It just kinda came to mind while roasting marshmallows."

**HORSE
POWER**

Artist PROFILE

Mike del Mundo

COUNTRY: Canada



Mike is an illustrator who mainly paints covers for Marvel Comics. Recent work includes cover art for the new Marvel NOW!

titles, X-Men: Legacy, Avengers Arena, A+X, and Deadpool: Killustrated. He's also contributed interior art for the relaunch of Guardians of the Galaxy's Infinite Comics.

www.deadlydelmundo.com



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**X-MEN
LEGACY #5**

"Here's my X-Men: Legacy
sketch for issue #5."

X-MEN LEGACY

OFFICER LEGUM

Sketchbook

DOG IN TIGHTS

"I love the irony of this: my dog in a Flash costume with no intent to run around. It just worked perfectly!"

NOPE, NOT
GANG OUT.
I LOOK
RIDICULOUS.

"Whenever I'm on the train
I draw, mainly to kill boredom"

FREE SUPERMAN

"It's great to see people
reading comics!"

MAN EATS SOUP

"I spend a lot of time at
food places and I never
forget my sketchbook. I find
chopsticks a lot more
interesting to draw than
a fork and spoon."

DAILY COMMUTE

"Whenever I'm on the train I draw,
mainly to kill boredom. Sometimes I
capture human interaction that tells
something of a story and a lot of times
I'll exaggerate the story by replacing
people with popular characters. In
this case Logan is annoyed by
Peter's curiosity. This regularly
happens on the train."



**THE
ULTIMATE VILLAIN**

"I always find it funny to observe people's frustration, spending hours mind-attacking a Rubik's Cube, or on those mini-puzzle games. I would say this is Hulk's greatest villain."



Want to share your sketches? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com, or upload your drawings at www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook.

MYSTIQUE #9 "This was my first Mystique cover, and I wanted to really set the bar high. Sexy, dangerous and iconic seemed like a good first image." [close](#)

“When I got my first assignment I was amazed at all the different stuff I was going to have to draw”



Mayhew

MIKE MAYHEW

LOADING...

Mike's gone full cycle since his love of a certain 1977 film propelled his career through hyperspace!

Being born in the late 1960s or early 1970s must make you one of the luckiest people on earth. Not only were long, languid summers spent cruising the block on Raleigh Choppers, but something exciting and revolutionary was happening on the big screen: Star Wars. Wandering into a packed playhouse and seeing that famously grand-scale opening scene for the first time ever must have been nothing short of magical.

Mike Mayhew can count himself among the lucky ones. The illustrator considers it a seminal moment in his life. "I could not have been more primed for that movie," he says. "I vividly remember seeing the trailer for the first time on TV." As with most children around the world at the time, the young Mike got caught up in Star Wars mania, intensely reading the tie-in comics and playing with the licenced toys.

It wasn't always this way. As Mike recounts, his early love of sci-fi and fantasy had always been on the cusp of popularity. "Even though monster and sci-fi movies were on, and I could get mags and comics from the neighbourhood 7-Eleven, it still felt like that stuff was on the fringe." The release of Star Wars legitimised Mike's passion. "All the things I was interested in suddenly got a new-found respect and prominence in the cultural landscape."

Mike's involvement in Dark Horse Comics' upcoming The Star Wars (yes, the 'The' is intentional) must feel like a dream come true. The comic goes back to George Lucas' original draft of Star Wars, before the numerous rewrites and edits that turned it from a sci-fi fanboy's script to a celebrated piece of cinema. But Mike's involvement in the project is the pinnacle of some 35 years of hard work.

DRAWING AT A YOUNG AGE

Even before he fell in love with Lucas' universe, Mike spent a lot of time alone with pen and paper. "I was also an only child who spent a lot of time drawing to keep myself entertained," he says. One of his biggest influences of the time was DC Comics' Neal Adams, whose illustrations for Batman proved particularly inspirational for Mike. "I remember being mesmerised by Adam's art. His work and the reception it had in comics is a big reason why I strive to create 'realistic' images."

Mike moved to an apartment in New York to pursue his career, and picked up work on Topps Comics's Zorro. "Like any other rookie in comics, when I got my first assignment I was amazed at all the different stuff I was going to have to draw," he says. But the industry was going through an upheaval: for one month in 1998 Marvel produced no comics

Artist PROFILE

Mike Mayhew



AGE: 43

FAVOURITE ARTISTS:
Frank Frazetta, Norman Rockwell, Jack Kirby, Neal Adams and

Michael Golden

SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop, 3ds Max

AVERAGE TIME PER IMAGE: Too long (just ask my wife!)

WEB: www.mikemayhewstudio.com



WIZDARD WATCHMEN COVER "Watchmen influenced me immensely as a kid, and I bought it every month when it came out." [Close](#)

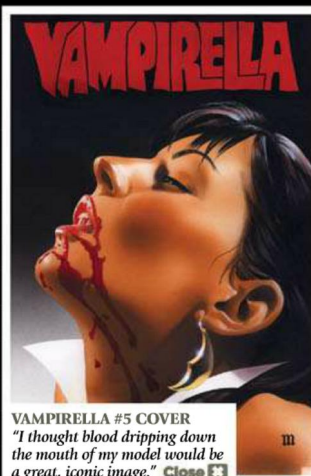
© Wizard Magazine

Gallery





DANGER ROOM "Here's all the original X-Men in action in the Danger Room – it had to be a show-stopper!" [Close](#)



VAMPIRELLA #5 COVER "I thought blood dripping down the mouth of my model would be a great, iconic image." [Close](#)



SPAWN #179 "This might be my favourite B&W interior page ever. This one has it all: war, demons, hell and a gigantic gun!" [Close](#)

MYSTIQUE SWAGGER

Mike recalls a Marvel cover run where everything fell into place, although he was filling in the blanks

"When I was on my Mystique cover run, I had a wealth of experience behind me. I had recently done a lot of Marvel material, and after Vampirella had gained a lot of experience with painted pin-up type covers. The Mystique cover assignment was the perfect blend of those two things, which I felt I was good at.

"For this 2003 acrylic piece I had little to go on. Usually cover artists have no idea what the story is going to be in the issue they're doing a cover for, since they have to turn their art in for the previews catalogue three to four months before the issue ships. This one was probably spun out of a thin description of what happens inside.

"At the time, I had a new lease on life in the comics business, and was getting a lot of positive feedback. I felt like my techniques involving hyperrealism had finally met my expectations after years of experimentation. All the chances I was taking in my art were paying off.

"This painting was my fourth in the run. It captures the swagger I had at the time. It was probably the first time in my career that I felt I had become the success I set out to be. I hope to keep same sense of vision and dedication I had when I did this painting throughout my career."

Comments



Ian Dean
ImagineFX

"You can see all of Mike's experience and passion flowing through this one image, from the pin-up techniques to the dramatic Marvel storytelling. I can't imagine Mystique again without Mike's version popping into my mind."



Tony Foti
Pro artist

"The first thing that stood out was the soft transitions throughout her skin. They contrast well with the reflective materials that her clothing and guns are made of. I love how straightforward the composition is. Clear gesture, bold colours and a simple background highlight this excellent drawing."



Antonio Cano
ImagineFX reader

"Mike's Mystique impressed me, not only because of the technical quality of the drawing, anatomy, foreshortening, but also for its strength. The composition, her angry expression and lustful colour contrast make me jump out of the chair every time I see it. She's really Mystique, ready to kick someone's ass."



© Marvel

➡ whatever. "Everyone was like: 'You draw comics? Why? Everything is video games and anime now!'"

Realising he had to up his game, Mike shifted towards learning to paint illustration and mimicking the style of legendary Japanese artist Hajime Sorayama. Despite his best efforts to reposition himself, he woke up one morning flat broke in New York – not a good city to have no money in – and so decided to move back to his home state of Arizona. As things turned out, his luck quickly changed for the better.

LAST BITE OF THE CHERRY

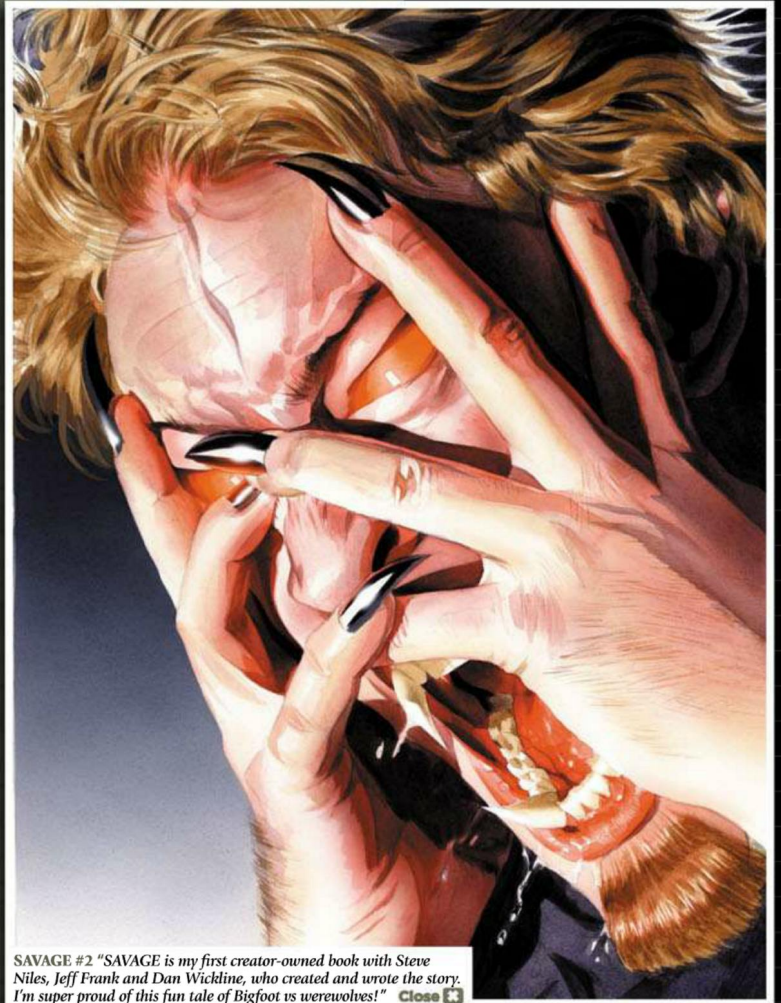
"I got an assignment to do Vampirella monthly in late 2000," says Mark. "I was thrilled at the opportunity and considered it my last chance to finally do the types of comics I had envisioned." It was here that Mark also developed his distinctive art style, thanks to an inker jumping ship at the last moment. "My editor felt my pencils were so tight that we could ink from them. When I let go and stopped pencilling for an inker, I began to develop my fully rendered pencil process."

Mike wasn't the only one to experience a reversal of fortunes: Marvel was finding its feet in the early days of digital, and cinematic successes Blade and X-Men were introducing a new generation to the joys of fusty comic stores. Mike's work was spotted by Marvel's big wigs and he went on to apply his 'fully rendered' pencil art to the Mary Jane young adult novels. "Marvel has steadily given me work ever since, and I'm very proud to have contributed in some way to most of the 'events' over there ever since," he says.

BECOMING A COVER STAR

It was around this time that Mike also found his forte: covers. They're the work he finds most challenging, but also most rewarding. "Probably the first thing that people need to keep in mind is that covers are a piece of art the publisher needs four or five months before the book is printed," he says. "That means a lot of time. They have a paragraph description of what's in the book. The rest is up to you."

He's also keenly aware of how comics move in the digital world, and how important it is to create covers that are striking on comic store shelves, but can



SAVAGE #2 "SAVAGE is my first creator-owned book with Steve Niles, Jeff Frank and Dan Wickline, who created and wrote the story. I'm super proud of this fun tale of Bigfoot vs werewolves!" [Close](#)

also be passed around on the internet as tiny files. "I try to really plan for the multiple applications that covers have in the modern comics world, and give the publisher the best value for what they are paying for," he says. "It's an extremely demanding field, since new and amazing artists are popping up all the time."

It's fitting that Mike should find himself working on an adaptation of the very movie that sparked his interest in all things sci-fi and comic book. He still seems to carry the wide-eyed adoration he had for the medium when he was a child, and his story reads like that of a real-world Luke Skywalker: a tale of triumph over adversity, of failings and new beginnings. The Force certainly is strong in this one. ●



NAMOR #4 "This is one of my favourite paintings. I spent about three days on the final art, which is pretty quick for me." [Close](#)

Gallery



Development sheet

Artist PROFILE

Mark Behm

Country: US



Mark has been working in games and film since 2000. He's been an animator, concept artist and illustrator, and is currently living in Seattle. After years spent working for Valve, Mark is now a full-time freelance artist.

www.markbehm.com

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX

PROJECT TITLE: MOTHERSHIP CONNECTION

Everybody's seen a human rider on a dragon, but what happens when they have to deal with their flight-deck managers? **Mark Behm** implies a larger fantasy world that you don't usually see with this snapshot in time...

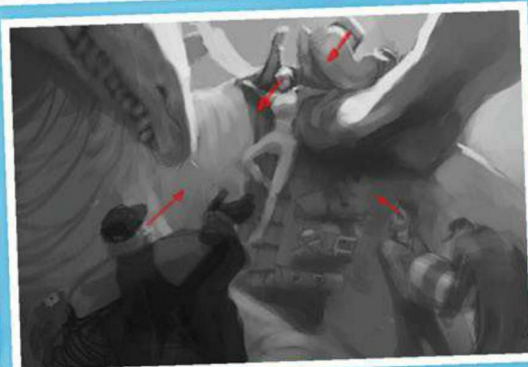
The need for speed

I start thinking of ways of telling the story visually with staging, camera, light and composition. I limit my time on these to a few minutes each and I keep them small and quite zoomed out. I try to push as far past my first ideas as I can in the time I've given myself.



Danger zone

I run my chosen composition through a few checks. Where are my focal points and where do I want them, and in what order? What path does my eye take? What shapes bring me back to my focal points as they drift away?



Goose, you big stud!

Still focused on composition, I need to plan how to reveal each area of focus in order, just like a story. I continue to organise areas with a "heat map" of where I want the viewer's eye to be drawn most. I also plan out my big shapes of value, making sure that they're appealing and reading well.



Tower flyby request

I start exploring colour themes. I quickly experiment and then abandon the idea of making it a moonlit scene. I decide to go with my original idea of overexposing for shadow detail. This gives the viewer a more intimate camera to take in the scene.

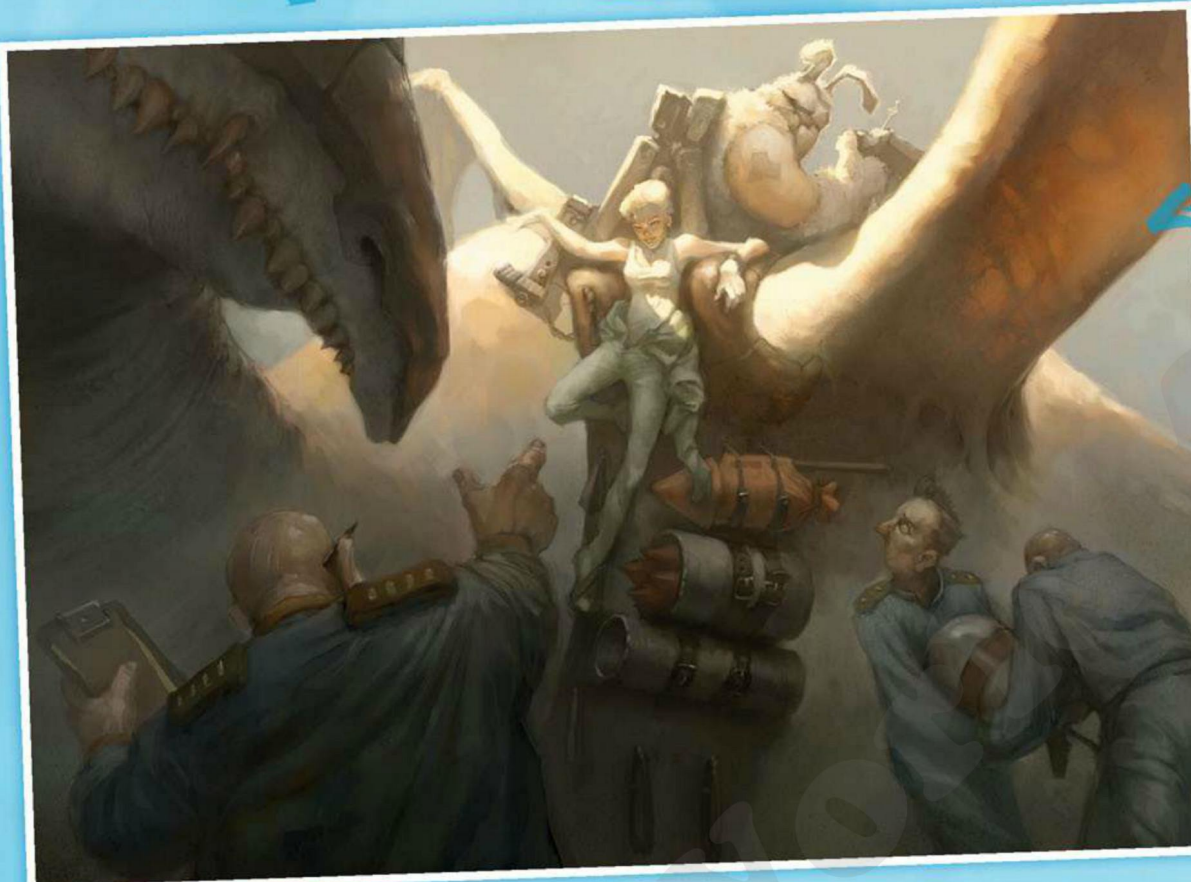


Negative Ghost Rider

I draw over and enlarge the thumbnail to establish the proportions, expressions and personalities and appeal I'm after. I know I won't be keeping many of these lines, but they will hold a strong influence over the painting.

You can be my wingman any time


This part ends up being shorter than the planning stage. I'm not exploring any big ideas, yet strive to keep an open mind. I'm confident enough in my plan to carry it through to the finish.



SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

Are you working on a project, or doodling your own development sketches that you'd like to share with us?

LET US KNOW! Email your WIPs and final images to: develop@imaginefx.com



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Both sides.

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Workshops

26
PAGES OF
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Video workshops on
your digital edition...

If you see this Watch This button, click the
link (or write it down) to view the video
that accompanies a workshop.

WATCH THIS!

www.bit.ly/ifx97-block

Advice from the world's best artists

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This issue:

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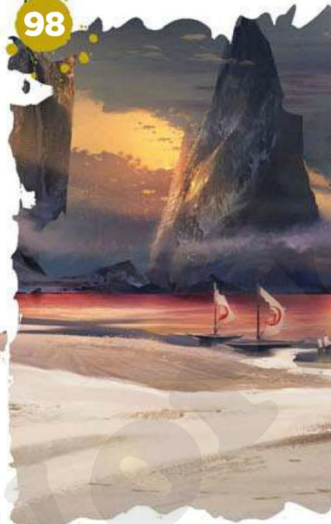
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98



Traditional skills & Photoshop

POSE TWO CLASSIC SUPERHEROES

Adi Granov shows you how to seamlessly blend digital and traditional methods to create a striking image, featuring two classic X-Men

Artist PROFILE

Adi Granov
COUNTRY: England



Adi is an illustrator and conceptual designer. His most notable

works include the Iron Man: Extremis comic book series, written by Warren Ellis, and his role as a conceptual designer and illustrator on the Iron Man and the Avengers films.

www.adigranov.net

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/97-cover

All images © Marvel

With the wealth of tools available in programs such as Photoshop and Painter, producing digital art has gone from strength to strength. In my own work I prefer to create an image primarily with traditional media, and then use colour in a method that complements my drawing approach in a seamless manner.

The underlying traditional work is the linchpin of my pieces, and I like to preserve as much of the natural qualities of the original image as possible by

striving not to mask or erase any organic textures and attributes. While these elements can be imitated digitally, it seems redundant to do so when they're naturally occurring aspects of the traditional art.

One of the advantages of working with digital colours is that you're given the luxury of being able to experiment and erase any wrong turns, while the underlying drawing remains intact. Having said this, and as you'll see from this workshop, I'm inclined to avoid

many of the advanced options in Photoshop and work predominantly with the program's more basic features. I find this helps to prevent me overworking a piece and aids in retaining the energy of the original work.

I use Photoshop because it suits my painting process, and here I'll show you how to take an image from greyscale to full colour. For this workshop you'll need to have a solid grasp of using light, shadow and colour, but only a moderate knowledge of Photoshop is necessary.

1 The assignment

On this occasion the task is very specific. I have to create a cover image for a magazine that features two characters – in this instance it's Cyclops and Jean Grey of the X-Men. The characters are to be depicted in their 1960s uniforms, and the goal is to produce an arresting image that will be striking and eye-catching on the magazine when in shop stands.

2 Initial sketches

During the sketching stage I don't get bogged down with details, and focus instead on the overall feel and composition. I then send the sketches to the ImagineFX team, who ask that I retain a softer, more vintage look to Jean Grey's face, and that I reposition Cyclops' hand to fit best with any text or logos that will appear on the cover. This avoids any key elements of the image being covered.

3 The tight layout

Once the sketch and the direction of the image are approved I draw a tighter line-art layout in Photoshop to make sure everything fits where it should, and eliminate any potential issues with the format and scale. I'm trying to get the proportions and the features right at a stage when the style and the line weight aren't important yet. I also play around with the line.



WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/ix97-x-men



4 The study

Having finished the layout I decide that Jean's face and features feel unresolved and that, because it's the focal point of the image, I need to do a study of it before proceeding. So I figure out the overall volume of the image and the relationship between the figures by quickly working out the shadows and depth. Because it's for my eyes only (usually!), I don't pay any particular attention to style or beauty – just to the elements that will inform me about the things I'm uncertain about.





5 The lightbox

Having drawn the tight layout, I print the image out at the size of the paper I intend to use. I use a lightbox to trace the drawing on to the paper for the final piece. I now have a clean, well-composed image that's ready to be worked into.

6 Traditional tools

I use 100 per cent cotton watercolour paper for my work because it's resilient and responds well to inks and washes. I work primarily with HB and B pencils; they're soft enough to work with, but don't smudge readily. I also use H pencils when a lighter touch is required for shading. Fineliners and acrylic washes are my inking tools.

7 Greyscale rendering

I now establish where the light and dark areas need to be. The darkest elements will be done in black ink, and the lightest will be the white of the paper itself. I work with pencils and fineliners to develop volume through shading and cross-hatching techniques. Pay attention to the different materials you're drawing to accurately recreate textures.



8 Inking

As I work with the pencil and crosshatching, I add ink washes over the shading to give the image more depth and a slightly more painted look. I usually do this as the last step because it ties everything together and provides a solidity that pencils alone can't achieve. I survey the image and decide when it feels finished enough for the colours to take over. I always find that the colouring goes much smoother over a more resolved and finished greyscale image. Any mistakes that I make during the drawing and shading stages will take longer to rectify during the colouring stage.



9 The digital process

Once I'm satisfied with the black and white piece I scan it into Photoshop at a resolution of 300DPI. To have the scan match the original drawing as closely as possible, I use the Curves tool (Image>Adjustments>Curves) and adjust as necessary. I then set the greyscale art as the background layer. I now create a Multiply layer on top of the art with a medium value colour, to give the image an overall tone and shade. This makes the whole image seem as if it's drawn on coloured paper, which provides the middle value and enables me to go either light or dark in the following stages.



10 Flattening the colours

I mask the figures with a single colour and create a Soft Light layer. Now with a hard-edged brush I fill the separate elements of the image with their respective colours. This process is referred to as flattening, but it can also be considered a form of masking. I choose approximate colours to what I intend to use; these can be easily adjusted once the whole image is filled by selecting individual areas.



Shortcuts
Rotate view tool
R (PC & Mac)
Enables you to rotate the canvas, which means you're able to place more natural strokes.

11 Layer hierarchy

Having established the basic flat colours, this becomes my selection layer where I can, by using the Magic Wand tool, select individual colours throughout the rest of my process. This colours the greyscale and adjusts its value depending on the colours used. Lighter colours lighten and darker colours darken. I then adjust the hue, saturation and lightness of each colour. The image should end up having an appealing, watercolour-like look at this stage.



PRO SECRETS

Use highlights sensibly

Don't bathe the piece in unnecessary highlights, because this creates unnecessary distraction. Instead, use them at specific points to focus the viewer's eye on strategic points within your piece.

12 Traditional approach

I always work on top of my line-art as if I were colouring it traditionally and laying the colours on top. To preserve the texture of the traditional drawing I often make a copy of it and place it on the top of my layer stack in Soft Light mode at 50 per cent. This will retain most of the texture of the traditional rendering, but it'll preserve the mistakes, too. This is why it's important to get the greyscale stage right in the first place.

13 Building volume in the image

I start rendering the colours in a new Hard Light layer. At this stage I'm focusing on the volume of the forms, adding depth to the shading that's already been established. I tend to pick colours from the canvas itself and play around with lightly "glazing" over the image with a pressure-sensitive brush. The layer mode again enables going both dark and light, so I alternate between the two (Ctrl+X) as I work my way around the image.



14 On to the background

The complexity of colouring your background will depend on how detailed it is, and if it features objects, it'll follow the same steps as the characters. Using my mask layer I select around the characters and on a new Overlay layer I paint in some clouds and smoke, which establishes the overall depth and feel of the image, and will guide me when I finish rendering the characters.



15 Rendering the colours

I continue on the characters now, adding some other colours into the mix, using cooler tones in the shadows, warmer on the parts of the faces such as cheeks and noses, a bit of pink on the lips, and so on. I jump around the image as I build it up, trying not to get bogged down in a single area, but instead edging forward on it as a whole.

16 Highlights

The smoother the surface, the more defined the highlight reflection will be, while a matt surface will create more diffused, softer reflections. Smooth areas of the skin, such as the tip of the nose, will have much sharper reflections than the softer ones, like the cheeks. The same applies to the materials: leather and vinyl will have much sharper highlights while cotton will have a soft, subtle highlight.



17 Adding details

I keep working in my Hard Light layer, as well as a Normal one on top, which enables me to work more opaquely and refine the image. The image is nearly complete and I just play around with adding and refining details such as folds, hair and eyes. I spend a lot of time on the hair adding little reflections and painting wispy hair, giving the scene more life.

18 Special effects

Once the painting is near to completion I can apply special effects, such as the glow from Cyclops' visor. I usually play around with the various layer modes to see which works the best with the particular effect I'm after. Vivid Light is perfect for the red glow. I always try not to overdo these effects because it can make a piece look too "sparkly" and without focus. I also add some streaks of light and dust/debris to the background to make it more visually exciting.

19 Final adjustments

I use a couple of adjustment layers to balance the image and see if I can make it look more striking. I apply Color Balance and Curves adjustments and play around, avoiding the temptation to overdo it. I select the background and the characters separately and try out various adjustments. No specific rules – just whatever might make the image the best it can be.



Shortcuts
Switch foreground and background colours
X (PC & Mac)
Enables you to quickly switch between two colours.

20 Completion

I flatten the image and sign it. It's my work and I want people to know who created it. I also save a smaller copy of it as a lower-quality JPEG and open it in a different program. It's interesting how revealing this can be and might make me see something I've missed. If there's anything I think needs adding I do so, but otherwise the illustration is finished.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
ROUND POINT STIFF

This brush mimics natural media. I use it for line-work and rendering.

SOFT ROUND

A heavily textured brush that I use for rendering soft materials.

HARD ROUND

My general-purpose brush. Lightly textured and very versatile.

PRO SECRETS

A strong foundation

The core element of an illustration is the foundation. Neglect vital steps such as a good layout and strong composition at your peril. No matter how good your colours and effects are, they can't conceal a poor layout.

Key light solutions

I use Overlay, Color Dodge, or Screen layers when I paint in key lights. Overlay is best if your lights aren't strongly coloured, because it preserves your textures while pushing the values and saturation around. Color Dodge and Screen are great for lights with strong colours, but they don't preserve the subtleties of texture as well.



Focal points

The most important final touches had to be in the area where people's eyes would go the most – between the boy and the monster's mouth. So I spent my final hours adjusting the opacity of the reflections in the eyes, giving the moss a halo, and deciding which edges in the boy should be strong and which should be de-emphasised.



Spot lighting and storytelling

One advantage to under-lighting is that the shadows are well-lit, so leaving large areas in shadow is fine. Because of this it's a great technique for applying spot lighting, such as sunlight through leaves in a forest. I limit these light spots so they complement the composition. A soft spot illuminating the monster's cheerful smile modifies that smile so it appears a bit untrustworthy.



Maintain colour balance

Notice that while the blue in the background isn't nearly as saturated as the monster's colour. Having some blue back there helps keep the vibrant fur from feeling completely out-of-place in the scene. In this way I can make a colour pop without losing overall colour balance.



Photoshop USE LIGHTING CREATIVELY

Discover how to take a well-known tale from folklore and make it your own, with **Sam Nielson's** help

When I was young I lived at the end of a neighbourhood that ran along a high-banked stream. The space surrounding the stream could only be accessed through tunnels under a tall hedge of thorny wild roses. Once I climbed through, I entered what to me was an undiscovered land, shadowed by willow trees and bordered by orchards and grassy fields. I spent much of my time playing there, going on adventures.

I was thinking back on this time and came up with a story of a boy who was adopted by a group of creatures in the forbidden woods. He spent every moment he could in those woods, navigating the strange social order of the monsters.

The idea isn't that original, but I feel I can infuse it with something special as

I create this painting. So I play with the juxtaposition of innocence and experience, contrasting the history and danger of the place against the personality of the characters in it. I push this idea further by reversing the roles, making the boy appear the serious character, and the monster cute and innocent. One thing I feel is necessary is an element of mystery. Clarity is key in telling a story, but sometimes leaving one question unanswered can create tension and interest. So I want the characters' personalities to be clear, but I leave some ambiguity about their relationship.

With each decision I make, I try to amplify the heroic qualities of the boy, showcase the innocence of the monster, and introduce a hint of uneasiness with the textures and lighting.

Artist PROFILE

Sam Nielson
COUNTRY: US



Sam works as a concept artist for Avalanche Software/Disney Interactive. He has accumulated 18 years of experience both as a professional artist and teacher.

www.bit.ly/ifx-snelson

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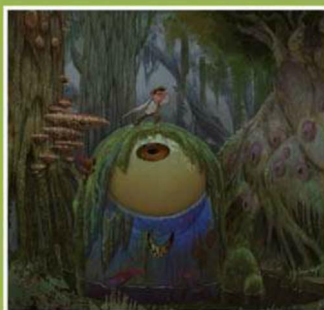
How I create...

A BOY AND HIS MONSTROUS FRIEND



1 Begin with colours

I usually start with flat colours, which enables me to quickly iterate on colours and values. If I paint something with a strong colour, I make sure that same colour is reflected somewhere else in the image. Once the colours and values feel balanced, I start to put in the details.



2 Lighting strategy

I use a painting process I call under-lighting, where I paint the textures and forms with even, ambient lights, then add key lights later. I choose to use this technique here because it preserves detail in the shadows, and keeps the composition of values flexible.



3 Focus on the hero

The boy needs to stand out as the most important element. He also needs to feel heroic, capable and relatable. Because of this, I put the sun in front of the scene so the boy is described in detail when lit. Hard sunlight and cast shadows keep the light from being too soft and friendly.

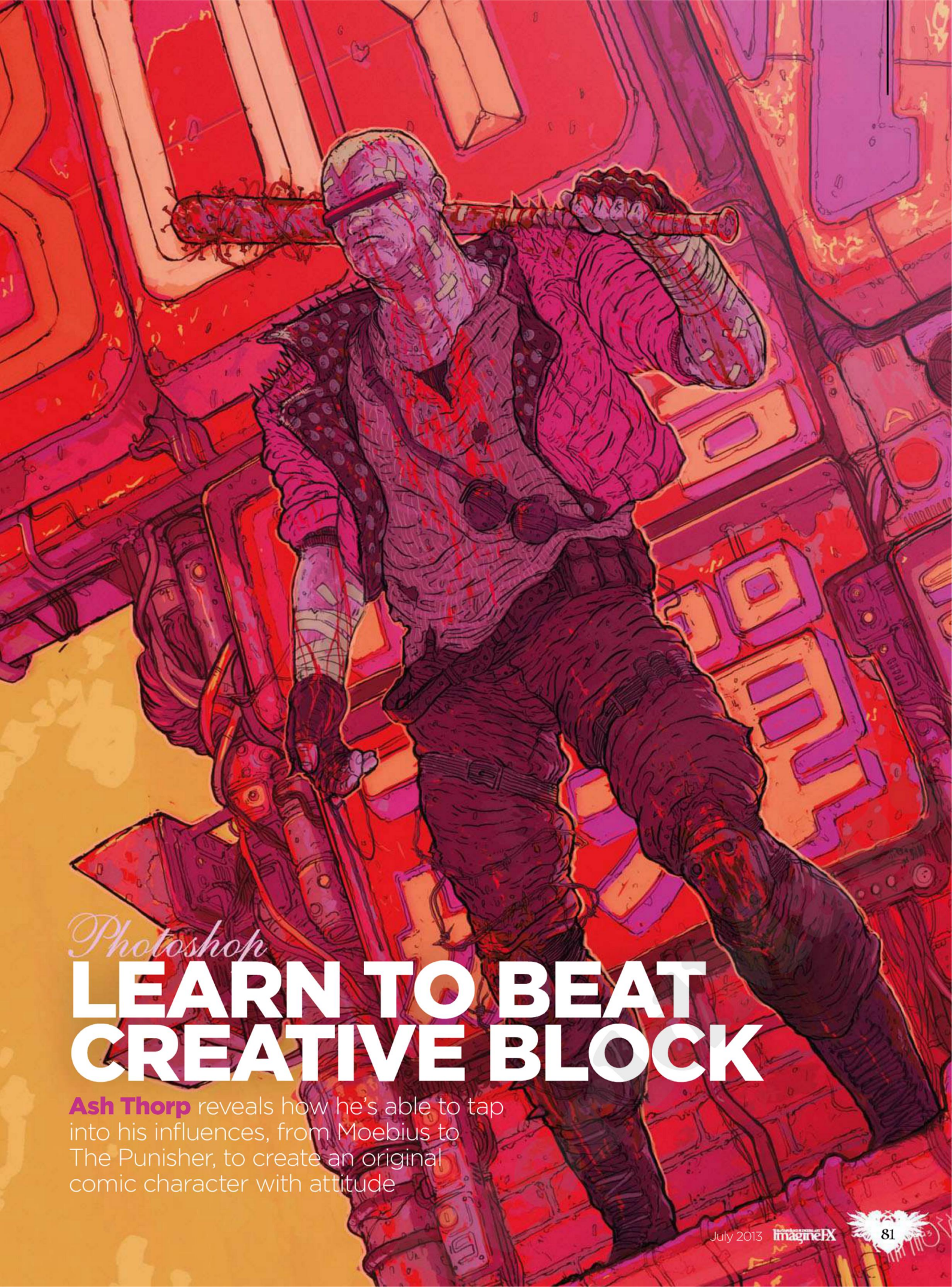
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP
CUSTOM BRUSH:
SMUDGE



Any time I want a softer transition between strokes I use a modified Smudge tool. Adding a lot of spacing and just a little scattering turns the Smudge tool into a great blender.





Photoshop

LEARN TO BEAT CREATIVE BLOCK

Ash Thorp reveals how he's able to tap into his influences, from Moebius to The Punisher, to create an original comic character with attitude

Artist PROFILE

Ash Thorp
COUNTRY: US



Ash is most happy visualising the worlds and images that live in his mind. He works from home as a freelance artist/designer on various feature films. www.ashthorp.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/97-block

In this workshop I'm going to take you through my creative process, which begins with working up a theme and seeing how far it takes me down the rabbit hole. I'll move from a rough sketch to line work, and explain how I add colour using unorthodox techniques.

Originally, this project was intended to be a fan art piece dedicated to the Marvel character The Punisher. I grew up reading

his story as a kid and was drawn to his raw and brutal tactics. Yet as the image progressed I realised it would be more rewarding to develop my own character.

I'll explore the ideas I have while developing not only the character, but also the world around him. My main goal with this project is to develop the ideas and images that take shape in my mind as I draw, bringing them together for the finished piece. I'm a big fan of the work of

Moebius and Geof Darrow – perhaps you can see echoes of their style in my art.

I'll also show you how using only one brush and some simple Photoshop tricks can produce some interesting results. I'll explain how I manage my ideas, files and compositions, and solve any issues to produce an image that I'm satisfied with. You'll see how I come up against creative obstacles, and do my best to beat them with basic art techniques. Enjoy!



WATCH THIS!

www.bit.ly/1fx97-block

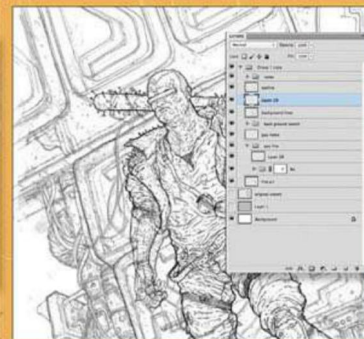
1 Strong start

I start by giving myself a theme, a story, something to help push my mind to another creative space. I then get the image in my mind and try and emulate it in my sketchbook by creating very small thumbnails. I want to do this to produce a fully formed, solid silhouette before jumping in and making something larger. If something the size of a square inch looks good then it'll look even stronger once it's blown up.



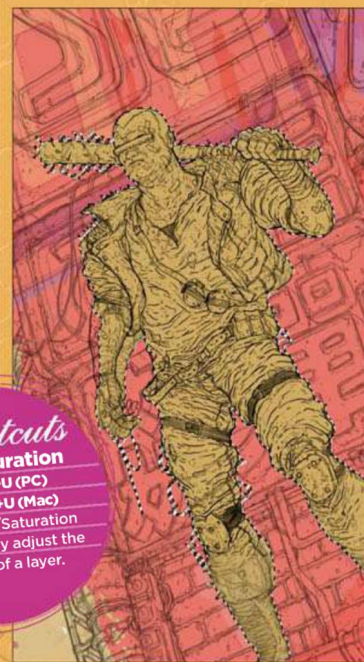
3 Begin sketching

Next, I create a new layer on top with no fill colour. This is the layer that I begin to sketch out my forms on with a 60 brush, which is set to Transfer in the Brush options dialog. Now I can see if I'm pulling off the shapes that I created in my little thumbnails properly.



5 Tackle the background

I'm now happy with the line work on the guy, and once I finish fixing any issues that I spot, I begin to flesh out the background. This is essentially a repeat of steps three and four.

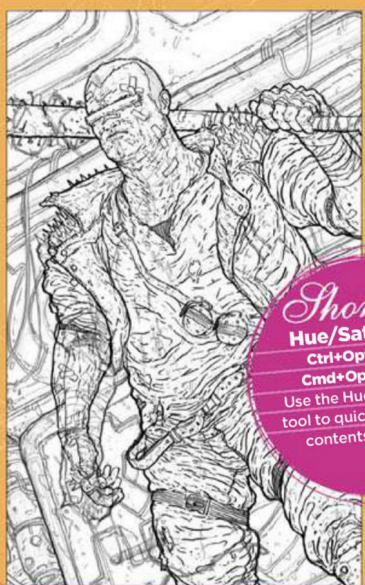


Shortcuts
Hue/Saturation
Ctrl+Opt+U (PC)
Cmd+Opt+U (Mac)
Use the Hue/Saturation tool to quickly adjust the contents of a layer.



2 Launch Photoshop

I finish my thumbnails, then launch Photoshop and create a new document (444x300mm). I then create a new layer and adjust the value range by pressing **Cmd+Opt+U** and pulling the Lightness option to the left. I do this so that I'm not looking at absolute white while I paint. This helps me with tones and it also save my eyes, because I usually spend many hours building these pieces!



4 Draw over the sketch

I set this rough sketch layer to between 40 and 50 per cent Opacity and then create a new layer, which will contain the line art. I use the same brush but turn off the Transfer option so that it's pure black and emulates a ball point pen.

6 Colour choices

Once the line work is complete I think about what colour palette will work best. I reckon that it'd be fun to set this shot in the daytime, which would contrast nicely against the usual dark and moody cyberpunk settings. I begin to make masks of each selection so that I can isolate areas of interest effectively.

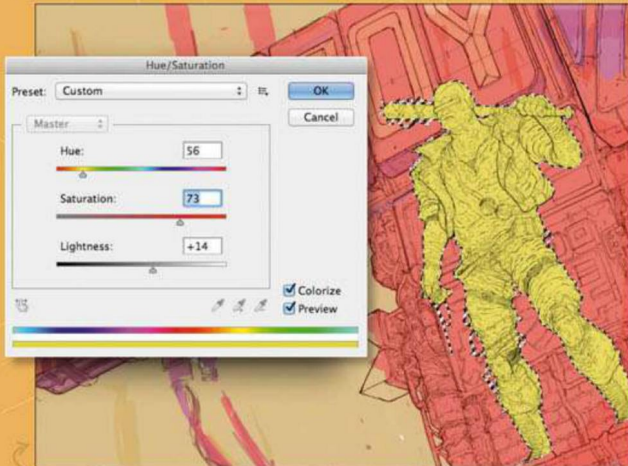
PRO SECRETS

Customisation options

Consider setting up a custom workspace so that all your tools are organised effectively. This enables you to get things done faster and more efficiently. To do this go to the Window tab, then activate and organise any tool that you think you need, and then go to **Window>Workspace>New workspace** and save it as what ever you like.

7 Create masks

I generate masks for the character, the background and the negative space. To do this I activate the Lasso tool by pressing L. I then trace each element and make a mask of the selection by clicking the mask icon in the Layers dialog.



8 Tones and values

Once all the masks are ready to work in, I begin to roughly paint in the tones and values that I'd like to work with. From time to time I open up the Hue/Saturation tab (Cmd+Opt+U). This enables me to alter any of the colours and value of any selection as I progress through the painting.



9 Refining the colours

Now that I have a rough version of all the colours in place and am satisfied with what I'm working with, it's time to add gradients and blur effects. To activate a gradient I press G and select a suitable colour using the Eyedropper tool (I). I do this to emulate artificial light or to diminish the harshness of colour in areas. Once I'm satisfied with the gradient I use a blend mode of either Screen or Lighten so that the colours underneath bleed through, finishing the effect.

PRO SECRETS

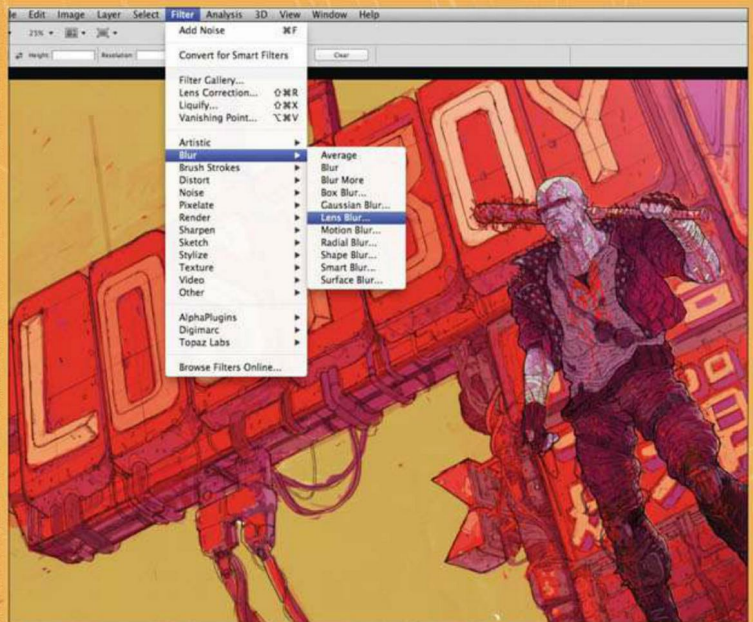
Photoshop's workspace

I like to adjust the perimeters of Photoshop so that they work better for me. In the Photoshop Preference tab click General or hit Cmd+K to open up the interface tab, then set all the colours in the screen modes to black or near black. When I work on a file I often hit F, which activates the full screen mode. This gives me more space to see the piece while I'm working.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

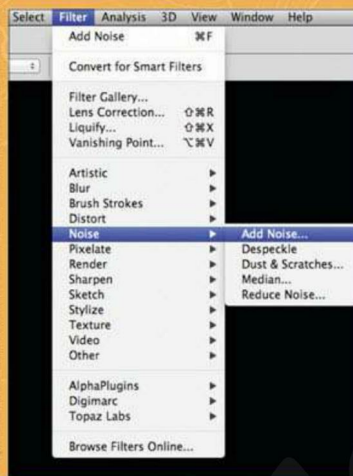
PHOTOSHOP STANDARD BRUSH 60

I limit myself to using the standard Photoshop brush 60 throughout the whole piece. However, I activate the Transfer option when I want to soften up the line while sketching forms. Setting it to Pen Pressure enables me to adjust each line and its transparency as I draw, based on how much pressure I apply.



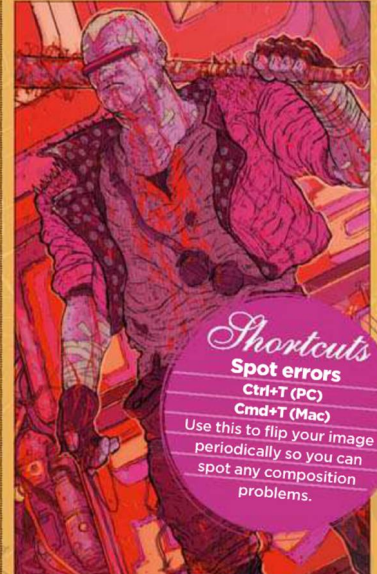
10 Blurring the art

I now flatten all the layers to the top without flattening the other working layer below so that I can go back and fix things later if needed. To do this I press Cmd+Opt+Shift+E. Once I have the flattened layer I then go to the Filter tab and select Blur>Lens Blur. In this window I set the perimeters that I need and hit OK. Back in the image I activate the Soft Light option of the layer and adjust the opacity to my liking. This effect enables me to soften the harsh digital lines and diminish its more digital feel. The result is something that's closer to traditional animation cell sheets.



11 Bring the noise

I now make a new layer, fill it with black and go to the Filter tab. Here I select the Add Noise option, I set the parameters to my liking and then press OK. Setting this noise layer to Screen on the top is another way to soften the harsh digital lines of the piece, making it feel more natural and analog.



Shortcuts

Spot errors

Ctrl+T (PC)

Cmd+T (Mac)

Use this to flip your image periodically so you can spot any composition problems.

12 Saving strategy

I save out a final file and name it appropriately. It's important to save versions of your image every 20-30 minutes if you can, just in case your computer experiences problems and decides to suddenly shut down... and we all know how frustrating that can be!



13 And... relax!

The piece is done and it's now time to sit back and enjoy a nice, cold drink.

Photoshop

CREATE AN ANIME GAME CHARACTER

Balance your design ideas with the requirements that are inherent in the concept art process. **Sookyung Oh** explains her approach

When people tackle concept art for the first time, most have trouble coming up with fresh ideas. However, when a well-defined brief is supplied, one can create and continuously tweak their design in the process of translating the theme into the concept. In this workshop I'll show

1 Choosing a theme

After some thought, I decide to draw a sci-fi female sniper, who's beautiful and elegant but also powerful. My concept will focus on the ideas of a beautiful woman and of powerful design.



2 Designing the body

Getting the base of the body finalised is important when creating a character concept. I'm not after a flawless body, but you have to know the natural flow of it to pose the character realistically. Here, because a pose reflects the character's personality, I think a lot about which pose will quickly sum up the character and the design of the futuristic outfit she'll be wearing during the game.



Artist PROFILE

Sookyung Oh
COUNTRY: South Korea



A concept artist as well as an illustrator, Sookyung

creates art for video games. Lately she's been working on the online role-playing game *Queen's Blade* and illustrations for *Legend of the Cryptids*.
www.osuk2.cg-hub.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/97-game

you what could be a balanced design that could become part of a video game. I hope you'll find my character both simple and interesting.

Before you get into the work, you need to choose a theme that you want to draw. If you don't have any plans, you can't draw a picture. After all, you need to dig

the ground for the foundations before constructing a building on top of it.

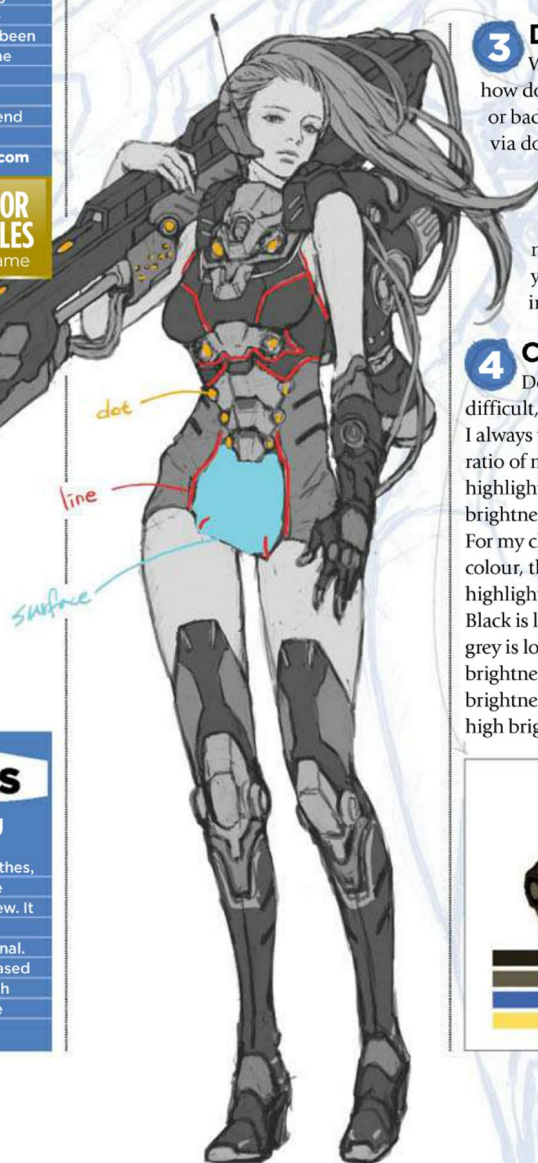
When you've chosen a theme, collect relevant historical materials. You'll get a lot of new ideas during research and collecting materials, and before you know it, there'll be plenty of concepts that are appealing for you to draw.

3 Design balance

What is balanced design? And how do you judge a design to be good or bad? I tend to analyse my designs via dots, lines and surfaces. I start with a basic design and keep in mind where these three key elements should be about my character's body. Hopefully you can see what I mean in the image here.

4 Colour palette

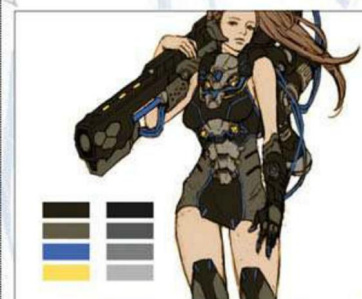
Deciding on a colour palette can be difficult, but there are just two things I always try to remember. First, I set the ratio of my main colour, sub-colour and highlight colour. Second, I classify the brightness and saturation of my colours. For my character I choose black as a main colour, the sub-colour is grey, and highlight colours are blue and orange. Black is low saturation/low brightness, grey is low saturation/medium brightness, blue is high saturation/low brightness, and orange is high saturation/high brightness.



PRO SECRETS

Interpreting history

When designing clothes, you shouldn't create something totally new. It might look strange rather than sensational. Make your design based on historical research and what people are familiar with.





Shortcuts

Adjust Hue/ Saturation

Ctrl+U (PC)

Cmd+U (Mac)

Tweak individual colours quickly with this shortcut.



5 Lighting

When it comes to applying lighting to a scene, in my work I use lighting for the entire body of the character, just like in a photography studio. This lighting has little dark spots and can render a character lightly. It's commonly used when working on concept sheets.



6 Facial expression

The face is the most difficult part to paint, but can also be the most fun. I get so obsessed with the face that when I don't like it I can't continue working on it – the impression that the face makes on the viewer is very important to me! The moment you see a character, you connect with their face. From the earlier concept, I remove the communication device from her ears and give her a fringe.



7 Design organisation

Now I'm halfway through the process, I organise the concepts I've created so far. I think about the reflection value of the clothing and sniper gun. Using two materials together – one that reflects light and one that absorbs light – the picture becomes rich in design. I also organise lines at this point.

PRO SECRETS

Set your light source

When you're colouring the light side of an object, stamp the daylight and adjust opacity while you colour, according to the reflectivity of an object. This way, rendering becomes easier.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: WET EDGES

I use the basic Hard Round brush that's a Photoshop default and then select the Wet Edges option.



Shortcuts

Adjust Color

Balance

Ctrl+B (PC)

Cmd+B (Mac)

Useful when you're not getting the colours you want.

8 Organising lighting

Thinking about where sunlight and neighbouring colours may strike, I organise shape and mid-tone. Because there's not much to the dark spot, I make use of rich mid-tone to increase the density of the drawing.

9 Expression of the material

To enhance the sci-fi feeling I add honeycombed patterns on the surface of her dress using an Overlay layer. The pattern is white, while the dark side is black and pressed slightly. When dealing with reflective metal the material can be expressed more realistically by setting the brush to 30 per cent and selecting the neighbouring colours.



10 Finalise the character

The final step is all about boosting the quality of the work. I add texture and reflect light subtly on the metals and clothing, using an Overlay layer and selections. Reflected light provides a sense of volume and adds to the completeness of the drawing. However, take care during this step. If you overuse reflected light then the drawing might become tacky looking. Finally, the process is over.



Procreate SEE PROCREATE'S LAYERS IN ACTION

Layers are an integral part of every art app. **Paul Tysall** shows you how the versatile Procreate has evolved layers for the tablet artist

It's a safe bet that if you're reading this magazine you're already well versed in the concept of layers. They're the staple of every digital art package out there and are one of the primary reasons why painting digitally is so flexible.

So it shouldn't come as much of a surprise that Procreate also uses layers, and they perform in ways that you're

already familiar with. You can edit the opacity of each layer, duplicate it, alter the order they stack and set various Blend modes. What Procreate does well is expand on what you can achieve with layers, while incorporating intuitive touch-gestures to aid workflow. This keeps the user interface minimal and artist friendly. Okay, let's take a closer look at what's on offer in Procreate...

Artist PROFILE

Paul Tysall
COUNTRY: England



After four years as ImagineFX's art editor, working with the elite of the digital artworld, Paul is now a busy freelance designer and illustrator.
www.tysall.com

KNOW YOUR LAYERS



A. Layers icon

Tap to open the layers dialog.

B. Layers dialog

Add, stack, move and change the layer's properties.

C. Plus icon

Tap this to create a new layer.

D. Blend modes

Procreate supports 18 Blend modes, which fall into the following categories: Darken, Lighten, Contrast, Difference and Color.

E. Background

Every new painting has this layer. You can turn its visibility off by clicking the eye icon, and exporting your image with this turned off gives you a transparent background.

F. Advanced Layer Features

This is activated when you tap a layer.

G. Title

Label your layers to keep track of them.

H. Opacity

Tap and hold, then slide left to lower the percentage and right to increase it.

I. Clear layer

Removes everything in the targeted layer.

J. Fill layer

This fills the layer with the selected colour.

K. Lock transparency

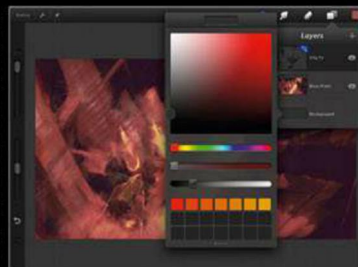
Also known as Alpha lock, think of this as the layer simultaneously being the Mask.

L. Merging

Choose either to Merge up or Merge down.

1 New layer

Tap the second icon in from the right along the top bar. This will open the Layers dialog. Procreate always creates a canvas layer, so tap this layer to bring up its colour options. To create a new layer you can tap the 'Plus' icon, which automatically places a layer above the current one, or you can pinch outwards between two existing layers and Procreate creates one in between.



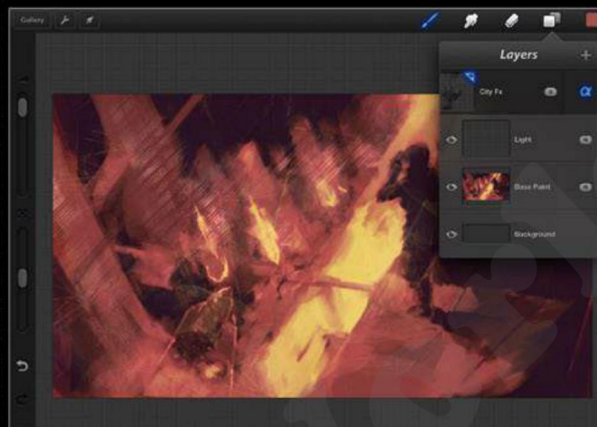
2 Merge layers

It's good working practice to minimise the amount of layers you work on during the painting process. Procreate enables you to merge layers in two ways. Tap on the target layer to open the Advanced Layer Features, and from the bottom field you can then select either Merge up or Merge down. Alternatively you can merge several layers by pinch-collapsing the layers into one. Both methods retain the lowest layer's Blending mode.



3 Alpha lock

One of Procreate's stand-out features is the ability to lock transparent pixels. This is called Alpha locking, and it enables you to describe the basic shape of a form, lock the surrounding transparency, and then continue detailing the interior shape. You can either open the Advanced Layer Features and select Lock transparency or swipe the target layer from right to left. You can deselect this option at any point.



Photoshop

CONTRAST YOUR VISUAL ELEMENTS

Brian Sum paints a shiny chrome robot in a desert environment, and has fun with the reflective surfaces and exposed mechanical elements

Artist PROFILE

Brian Sum
COUNTRY: Canada

Brian is a lead concept artist at BioWare Montreal. He's worked on titles such as Mass Effect 2 and 3, Dragon Age: Origins and Shadowrun, and is supporting the team on the next Mass Effect game.
www.briansum.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/97-anno2

My aim is to design a robot with highly detailed chrome surfaces and a sci-fi feel. I imagine a lone scout in a barren desert on a surveillance mission. Well equipped and designed to handle all kinds of situations, it's business as usual.

I've always loved the art of Hajime Sorayama, especially the amount of detail in his sexy chrome robots. These became a source of inspiration for this piece.

I want to illustrate contrasting elements of clean and streamlined

chrome areas with darker, exposed areas of more detailed mechanical bits and pieces. I think this contrast complements each other nicely. I also want this piece to feel more cinematic, focusing the attention on the character and a simple widescreen composition.

Blurring the background creates a depth of field effect that helps achieve this. I chose a simple desert landscape as the backdrop, again, careful not to make the environment too distracting from the character.

I always gather as much reference material as possible before starting a piece. This time it involves finding tons of images of chrome and studying its reflective and refractive properties.

Eventually I'd like to produce a series of paintings that feature the chrome theme. One thing at a time, though!

How I create...

A COMPELLING MECH DESIGN



1 Interesting shapes

I start out with a rough pen sketch. I know that I want to focus on an interesting silhouette early on. I like the shape of the head design, but I still haven't resolved the body design yet in the sketch. I decide to just jump straight into the painting and figure things out as I go along.



2 Finalise the design

Most of the visual flavour of the head design is retained and basic body shapes are blocked in at this point. I want to focus on the overall design first before tackling the chrome details. I flip the canvas back and forth because I haven't decided on which way to point the character yet.



3 Separate elements

The design for the chest plate and back/shoulder piece are key elements that still need to be fleshed out at this point. I want the darker parts to feel recessed and the chrome to have a raised outer shell. The basic tones and beginnings of the reflective chrome surface are now loosely blocked in.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP
CUSTOM BRUSHES

These are a few of the brushes that I used. Most of them were used to add texture and brush variety to the piece.

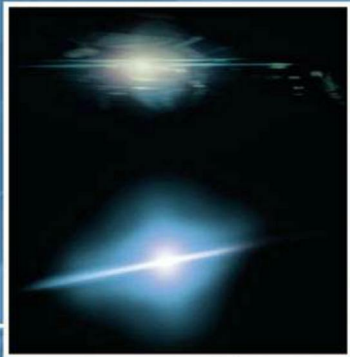


Flow and composition

The shapes and lines of the armour components direct the focus towards the central area of the character. Keeping the right amount of chrome areas with darker mechanical areas balances the composition.

Realism vs impressionism

I want the image to feel realistic from a distance, but still maintain a painterly feel when you get up close to the details, so I use the Smudge tool in certain areas to achieve this effect. I pay attention to the surface angles, curves as well as adjacent objects, while trying to accurately portray the chrome reflections.



Highlights and lens flares

Adding white highlights to areas that require it makes the image begin to pop. I also have lens flare textures that I apply on a separate layer set to screen to further enhance the character's shiny surfaces.



Painting chrome

Because chrome is a reflection of its surroundings I sample much of the colours from my background image (A). This result involves a combination of using the Rubber Stamp tool and the Eyedropper tool (B).



Artist PROFILE

Ryan Sook
COUNTRY: US



Ryan is a comic book artist. Creating iconic cover images, graphic novels and series has established Sook as a lasting presence among comic creators for nearly two decades.
www.ryansook.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/97-tips

Artist insight MOOD LIGHTING FOR COMIC STORIES

Whether you're working digitally or traditionally, lighting your line art effectively can set the tone for the story you're telling, says **Ryan Sook**

Capturing the right tone for a comic is essential. Choosing a lighting approach is one sure-fire way to immediately ascribe a specific mood to a picture.

Lighting is as important a part of our pictures as composition, perspective and posing. Recognising the effect that different approaches to handling light can have is one more of those foundation tools that enable us to create powerful imagery and tell a story with the maximum amount of impact.

All too often though, modern comic illustration neglects to make full use of

this tool, instead favouring artistic style or leaving it up to colour to 'direct' the illumination. This can take away from the story we want to tell! A variance in approach to lighting should only enhance artistic flair without losing the more crucial element of storytelling. If our line art can capture the mood, then applied colour should follow suit, amplifying what the black line has established.

As cartoonists we may have more liberty to apply light distinctively than any other medium. Here's hoping the following tips will be a starting point to consider how you use light in your stories.



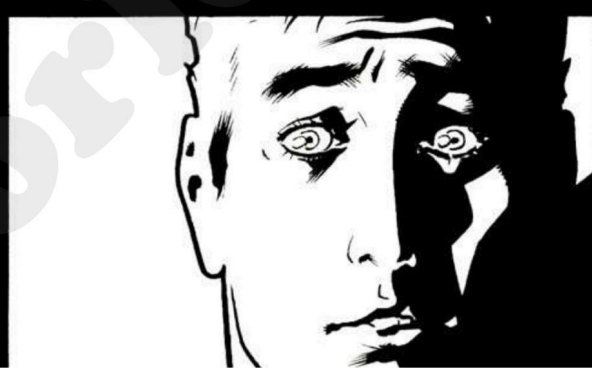
2 ADD DRAMA

Lighting is often the greatest tool at our disposal when adding drama to a mundane scene. We not only consider how to light something, but also direct where light is coming from, to give a greater impact to that scene and thus enhance the story's drama. Consider a scene from *The Flash: Infinite Halloween* where two characters are speaking in a room. With no character action or movement, using the fireplace to cast impossible shadows gives the impression that what's happening in the room is of grave importance.

1 ENHANCE THE HEROIC

Lighting your heroes can elevate their 'super' side. Bodybuilders use oil to reflect light so that their muscles appear more defined. We can use light and shadow on a figure to magnify strength and power the same way. For the figure that doesn't rely on their muscles, lighting a scene so that light seems to emanate from that figure can be equally revealing of a heroic nature.

© Dark Horse Comics



3 SEDUCTIVE SILHOUETTES

Good lighting decisions can optimise a sexy scene by enabling the viewer's imagination to fill in the blanks. Choose lighting that gives the impression of passion without revealing the details. Often it's the evocative and not the provocative image that has the stronger impact!

“Good lighting hints at the passion without revealing the details”

Shortcuts

Inking

I find it useful to sketch different light sources for my drawings on a tissue overlay before inking the final image.



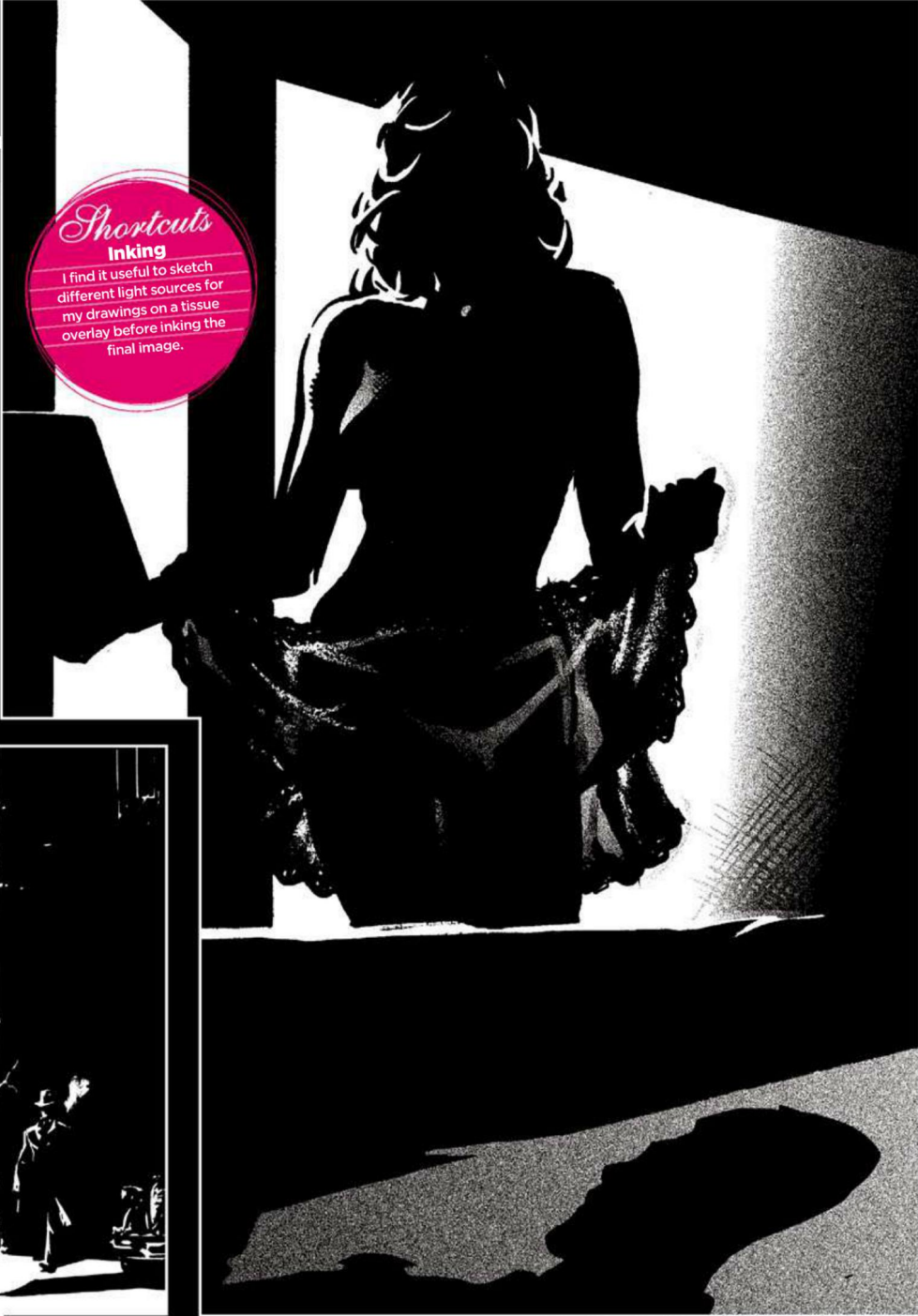
4 LESS IS MORE... MYSTERIOUS

Another occasion when less detail is more effective is the mystery. This is when lighting can get really fun! When a story is revealing little bits of information at a time to build a mystery into a great climax, take the opportunity to let your line art do the same. Use lighting to cast dark shadows and let your figures and their surroundings converge in great dark areas. Highlight just enough detail to give the necessary information and let the viewer wonder at what lurks in the shadows.



5 SOMBRE SHADOWS

Black can also read as bleak when a scene is lit well. So the shadows that we've used for fright are equally valuable when dealing with those scenes that require a more depressive tone. When a character is downcast by circumstance, let lighting cast shadows on them to magnify the emotion of the scene. Something I've noticed that's particularly impressive is when a shadow cast by a figure takes up more space on the page than the figure itself. The darkness is somehow bigger than they can bear.



PENS AND BRUSHES

These are the key tools that I use regularly to create my comic art.



Pentel Mechanical Pencils 0.5mm 2B and HB leads for sketching.



Leow-Cornell Ultra-Round #8 Brush for 90 per cent of my marks.



Speedball Universal Tip Dip Pen.



Speedball Superblack India Ink used with a Strathmore Bristol 300 Series Smooth Finish brush.



Micron Pigma Pens 1mm and 0.2mm for quick inks.



Posca White Paint Pens for highlights.



6 HAUNTED BY THE HALF-LIGHT

More ominous shadows abound in the creepy themes that often fill the pages of comics. However, lighting scary scenes is not just about keeping everything dark. Find ways to use directional lighting and multiple light sources to accentuate a distorted reality. The flashlight under the face is so effective at implying creepiness because it's rare to see someone lit in that fashion. So then, high contrast coupled with an unusual light source will ultimately deliver a heightened sense of the macabre, as seen in this Joker's Asylum cover I drew for DC.

PRO SECRETS

Meet people

Conventions are a great way to meet potential clients. Talk to those you want to work with first, but also show your work to everyone! You never know who may be interested in your skills.



7 FANCY FREE

When dealing with the fantastic side of comics, be as creative with your lighting choices as you are with your character, spaceship or monster designs. In the world you've created, breaking the rules of lighting can be just as important as knowing them in the first place. This is the perfect place to use light as a tool to draw the attention of the reader exactly where you want to, uninhibited by the natural laws of light. Light sources abound with a magical effect in this *Seven Soldiers of Victory* cover.

PRO SECRETS

Work on a portfolio

In this age of social media, the post office is still a handy tool for getting your work in front of commissioning editors. Mail a sample of your work to the editor of your favourite comic.

8 KEEP IT NATURAL

Naturalistic lighting can be challenging, but it's also the easiest type of lighting to obtain good reference for. Just look around the room. To help resonate the believability of a scene, use lighting that's understood by the viewer as normal. Natural light ensures every element in a scene can be individual and yet harmonise with its surroundings. Lighting your work this way can bring clarity and realism when drawing a detailed environment or costuming.



“If your lighting isn’t amplifying the story then it may be distracting from it”

9 ON A LIGHTER NOTE

Eliminating black areas can be a great way to provide the right mood for a humorous story. Humour often relies heavily on the expression and body language of characters to pull off a gag. Leaving out oppressive light effects enables the line art to clearly express the animation of character, which could normally be lost in rendering highly contrasting shadows. If your lighting style isn’t amplifying the story then it’s likely to be distracting from it.



10 BY CONTRAST

Understanding dramatic lighting and its capabilities can enable us to combine different effects in the same picture showing stark transitions of emotion within a single image. This is invaluable when a maximum amount of storytelling is needed at one time. On a cover or title page for example, a conglomeration of lighting styles can give a wide range of visual interest and delineate between montage elements, as seen in this *Before Watchmen: Ozymandias* cover.



Shortcuts Using black

I always find it most helpful to apply my spot blacks first when inking, and then I can clean up the edges where necessary.

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ImagineFX July 2013



Simon Dominic paints our
monstrous cover
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The world's top paleoartists reveal how science can influence fantasy art.

Brave new worlds

Learn the composition rules for painting an epic space environment with J.CIRCLE.

Spare part art

Weta's Christian Pearce mixes influences in his vehicle designs.

Paint in patterns

Paint with elaborate patterns as Katie De Sousa creates an Aztec queen.

Photoshop PAINT LANDSCAPES WITH DISCIPLINE

Ross Tran reveals how he creates an environment through movement and experimentation, without resorting to random, messy strokes

Artist PROFILE

Ross Tran
COUNTRY: US



Ross has just turned 20, and is a designer and artist for film, games and television. He's also attending Art Center College of Design in Pasadena.

www.rosstran.net

**DIRECT LINK FOR
WORKSHOP FILES**
www.bit.ly/97-beach

PRO SECRETS

Use Curves

I think this is a powerful Photoshop tool that people tend to overlook. Using Curves on my flattened image, I'm able to experiment with colour schemes quickly. It also harmonises colours and it's easy to edit values and selected colours. Be careful, though: sometimes when using Curves there are so many options that can work, you don't know which one to choose!

Many digital artists these days try to capture a painterly look with a heady display of mark-making and brushstrokes. In this workshop, I'm going to show you some techniques and methods that will help you achieve a textured and loose painterly look in a smart, designed and efficient manner.

I see people try to achieve a painterly look with an approach that starts out by laying down an economy of strokes – and

things can easily get messy. Elements can become hard to edit and hard to fix as the layers and strokes build. I hope, through this workshop, that you can learn some methods to achieve that look and still keep a clean, effective image.

One of the greatest things I've learned through my career is how to think differently. There's a lot of thought and fundamental techniques that go into creating pieces of digital art, and I'd love to share some basic gestures and steps that

people tend to overlook when starting an image. Getting that initial sketch or idea down in an efficient way reaps rewards later on in the painting process.

For this workshop, I'm going to create a scene where travellers have docked on a foreign shore. This is a fantasy world with elements of realism to anchor the scene and enable us to invest in the story. I'll endeavour to paint a landscape and seascape that would capture the travellers' imaginations as much as ours.

1 The inspiration board

When starting a piece, it's great to dig through the internet, reference/inspiration folders, and other outlets to find images that can help your direction. I like to keep it on my secondary screen, so that whenever I get stuck, all I have to do is look over and be inspired or find reference. As artists we can become stuck, and this is a method to getting unstuck.

2 Attack the canvas

Just let loose and explore different ideas. Anything goes at this point, so experiment, get dirty and explore compositions. It's crucial to let the creative juices flow, and not adopt a surgical approach in this step because you're trying to figure out the mood and impact of your piece. I keep my brief in mind, look at my inspiration board and have fun!

3 Choose the right direction

This step can be easy, yet very hard. Sometimes you just know which one is the right piece to execute, and sometimes it takes another person's opinion. A good method is to try to imagine what your finished image would look like and if it'll be pleasing to the eye. I choose this one because I like how the abstract shapes fit in with one another, and I can see potential in the final outcome. After I pick this one, I start the shape design on another canvas.



WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/1fx97-beach

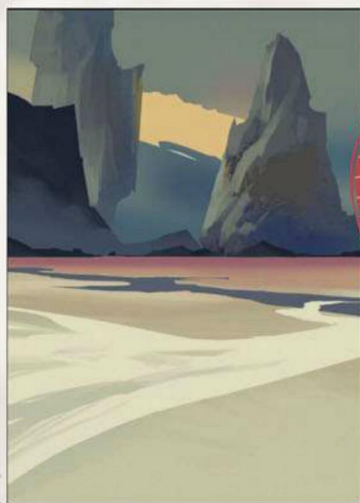
4 Shape composition

We can always keep working on our painted sketches, and I think it's important to have the option to change things if the client needs it. Having things on layers makes this possible. Here, I focus on the shapes and composition from my original thumbnail. I try to make the image read in greyscale before anything else. I try to vary the shapes – big shapes, curve shapes, vertical and horizontal shapes – and try to find a balance in the image for them.



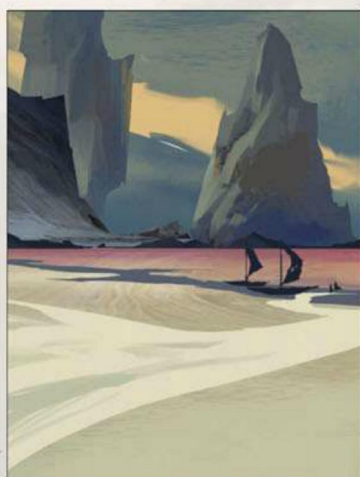
5 Replicating the colours

Now that I have my rough shapes that I referenced from my thumbnail sketch, I replicate the colours. I already have the shapes on layers, so it's easy for me to just get the colours off my thumbnail using the Eyedropper tool and put them on.



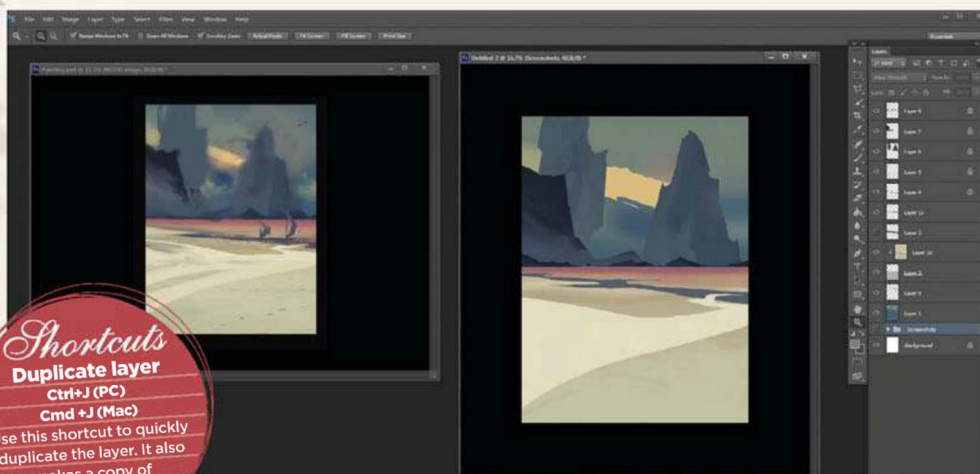
6 Sculpting forms

My basic shapes and colours are now in place, so now I sculpt the large masses – in this case, the mountains. Here I use an image of mountains and clip a part of it that will help me achieve the shapes I'm after. As I paint, I try my best to show form using shadow and light. After this, I scrap my mood sketch and start working on just the layered one. I think we should follow our comps only so far, or else we'll be too caught up making it look like the mood board, and this may hold us back from experimenting.



7 Adding scale

I think that any landscape piece is improved immeasurably if an artist is able to add a sense of scale. It helps the viewer put themselves in the picture. Here I add the boats and travellers that were indicated in my initial sketch.



Shortcuts
Duplicate layer
Ctrl+J (PC)
Cmd +J (Mac)
Use this shortcut to quickly duplicate the layer. It also makes a copy of selected layers.



PRO SECRETS

High Pass

I love using this filter as a finishing tool (Filter>Other>High Pass). It makes your image a bit crisper overall without losing quality, and is great for printing. You can choose the amount you want to High Pass, then erase where sharpening is unnecessary.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: AS 2

I love this brush for sculpting forms. It's perfect for trees, rocks and, in my case, the huge mountains in the back. One side of the brush is hard, and the other is soft, so there are plenty of opportunities and ways to use it.

8 Experimenting with photographs

I like to experiment with any method I can when creating pieces. I think artists should always find new ways to do things. Here, I find a picture of snowy mountains and crop it to my liking. I make it black and white, access the Levels menu and increase the contrast. I also clip the texture to my clean shape and change the blending mode to Overlay. I then make a brush out of it (Edit>Define Brush Set) and use it on my mountains. I try to blend the photos with brushstrokes – the key is to keep things looking consistent and not out of place.



9 Painting light rays

After the block-in of the forms and composition, the fun can begin! It's been a little tight, but now we can ease up a bit with light rays. It's always an editing issue with my work. I have to find the right balance or else things can become a bit cheesy. Here, I make a beam of light so the viewer can easily tell what's in front and what's behind the light. This is the good thing about layers – you can edit really easily. Once I have the light rays in place, I can go back to the mountains and change it according to the light.



10 Adding the clouds

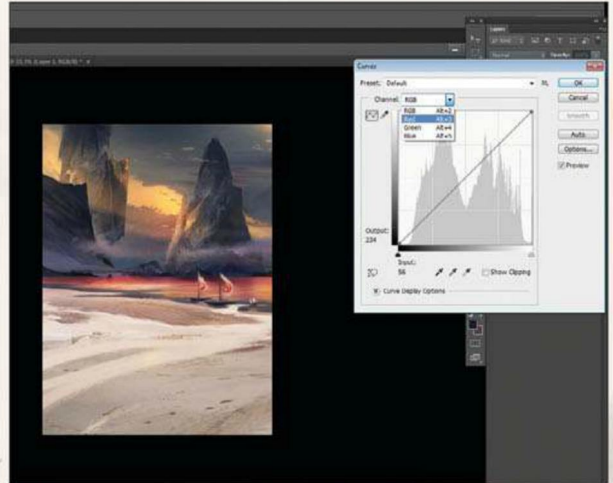
This is another fun step to experiment and add atmospheric depth to your painting. Use a mixture of soft and hard brushes to create visual interest to your clouds. There are a handful of hard elements to my piece thus far – adding soft elements like light rays and clouds can help create a visual balance of the soft and hard shapes.

11 Taking a step back

Now it's time to take a step back from my canvas and see how my piece is working visually. I turn layers on and off to see if the prior is better. I add some colour to my sails to help the ship visually. I feel that the sand isn't working, so I go back to my initial comp sketch and try to replicate what I had there. I give my clouds more visual shape and break them up. This step is to just check if the changes I've made are working, which helps the image move forward.

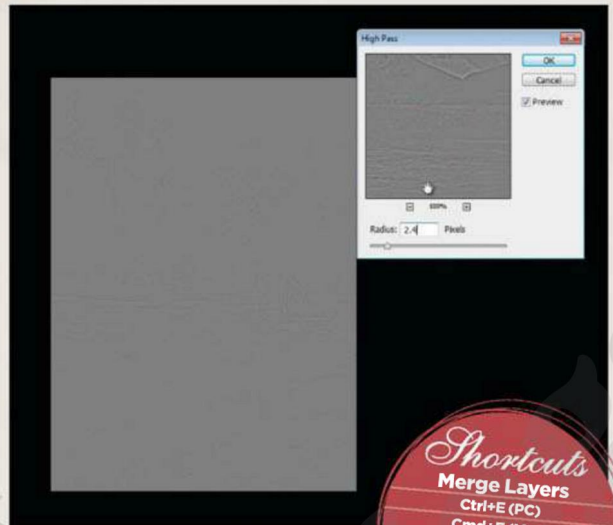
12 Details and story branding

I like to give stories to everything I design and make as I feel it makes an image more meaningful and full of impact. Here I add symbols and insignias to my sails. That's also where I want the viewer's eye to focus on. Having the symbols creates immediate contrast and makes the viewer look there. Giving the symbols on the sails reinforces the idea of travellers arriving on foreign shores.



13 The last five per cent

Now that I have everything in place, I can really just have fun and experiment. The last five per cent is really what makes a painting. I make a copy of the whole painting and place it on top. Now I can edit it as a whole. I use an Airbrush with an Overlay and Color Dodge settings to create more saturated hotspots. I play with Curves to help harmonise my image. You can see me here struggling with what versions to choose, because Curves works well at providing you with limitless options to pick from. It's good to have a second opinion, so luckily my roommate is walking by. I grab him to help me.



14 Use High Pass

I always use this step in all my paintings and it's no different here. High Pass is a useful filter that sharpens your image without sacrificing quality. There are many Sharpen filters out there, so find one that's right for you. After I have my final image, I make a copy of my entire image again and put it on top. Then I go into Filter>Other>High Pass. I set the number to a low number (2.4). After I click OK, I notice that the painting has turned grey with some discoloration, but this is okay. I set the Blending mode to Overlay, which gives me my final result: a more sharpened image on top and the original on the bottom. You can play with the opacity to find the best fit for you.

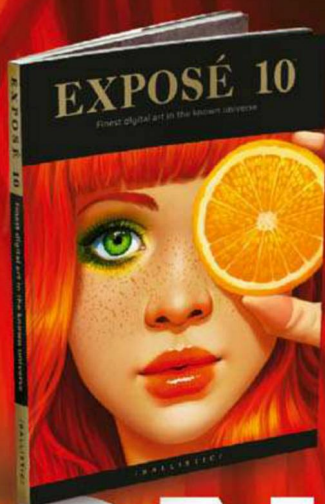
Shortcuts
Merge Layers
Ctrl+E (PC)
Cmd+E (Mac)
Use this to quickly merge selected layers. Great for saving time in the painting process.



/ B A L L I S T I C /

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Image: Daniela Uhlig, GERMANY Red Orange

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...

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ON TEST



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Wacom hopes that less is more with its latest Cintiq. But is this yet another stepping-stone product?

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Discover how to paint for film as texture artist Justin Holt creates every pore of a CG character's skin.

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Wreck-It Ralph reviewed. Plus, the artist behind the film's heroine on why she went to a candy convention.

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110 New games

Metro: Last Light; Defiance; Badland.

RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious



Cintiq 13HD



MINI ME Wacom hopes that less is more with its latest Cintiq. But is it yet another stepping-stone product?

The 13HD has the same specs as the 22HD and it's a versatile piece of kit – but therein lies its biggest flaw.

Price £750 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.com **Contact** +44 (0)207 744 08 31



The new Pro Pen is battery-free, cordless, incredibly responsive and will work on all of your other Wacom products, too.

Last year Wacom made a pretty big effort to change people's perceptions of its Cintiq range. The company moved the standard of its entry-level Cintiq up and kept the price down. The new £1,600 22HD Cintiq has replaced the similarly priced, yet relatively primitive, 21UX. Granted, it didn't shake the worlds of many budding digital artists, but at least Wacom is trying.

This year it's moved the Cintiq range one more step away from the device's esoteric, art studio-only reputation. The 13HD has many of the lauded Cintiq features under its diminutive hood, and it's £750. That's a Cintiq for under a grand!

Aware of the current glut of tablets on the market, straight out of its packaging the 13HD looks like a sturdy, stylish tablet. That's before you add the



You can work on the 13HD in one of three angles on its stand, or cradle it in your lap – it doesn't get hot like other Cintiqs.

main, USB and PC/Mac cables and realise there'll be no outdoor drawing on your lunch break with this baby.

In truth, mentioning 'tablet' here is a misnomer. Especially when looking at its HD LED display, which provides a wide viewing angle of 178°, a resolution of 1,920x1,080 pixels, 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity and 16.7 million colours thrown in for good measure. If all this sounds familiar, it should because these are exactly the same stats as the 22HD.

Much of the functionality is the same, too. You can program all the buttons to personalise your painting experience, and because you're working off your PC or Mac you'll be running fully



Much of the 13HD's functionality is the same as the 22HD. You can program the buttons to personalise your painting experience.

“It's a halfway house that will really only appeal to those who enjoy painting on a small screen linked to a monitor”

featured digital art software such as Photoshop or Painter.

So, other than the size what's different? First, there's the new Pro Pen. Battery-free and cordless, it's incredibly responsive and will work on all of your other Wacom products that you probably had to sell to buy the 13HD (that is, down to Intuos4).

Next is the handling. Two things stand out when you pick up a 13HD: it's lightweight and extremely cool – as in it won't melt your hands off. A common complaint from Cintiq users is that after an hour or so they feel like they're hovering over a radiator at full blast. The 13HD ImagineFX used was running

for four hours straight without even a hint of heat. So you can happily work over the 13HD in one of the three angles on its stand, or simply cradle it in your lap. Yet herein lies its biggest flaw.

When you cradle a tablet in your lap, you'd also expect to take it with you wherever you go. When you work from a Cintiq sat on a table, you expect a massive screen to get immersed in. The 13HD is a halfway house that will only appeal to those who enjoy painting on a small screen linked to a monitor – and many do, of course! But then, why wouldn't you just get a large Intuos5 Touch for £300 less? Perhaps Wacom's next release will answer that question.

ARTIST INTERVIEW

DANIEL LIESKE

The Wacom Evangelist talks about the new Cintiq

What were you most looking forward to in the 13HD?

I work with a dual-screen setup, but when I'm on the road I go without a second screen. So I was looking forward to a handy second screen to carry with me, with decent resolution, albeit a moderate size.

How did it deliver?

I'm very happy with it. It's light, it's thin, it fits right into my notebook bag and I can now set up a dual screen workspace anywhere I want.

And how did it fall short?

Oh, I think you can always imagine stuff being even better. It certainly would be cool if you could power the thing completely via USB, thus eliminating the extra power source.

Did you find Photoshop a little squished on the 13-inch screen?

That could be the case if you're using it as the only screen. If you're using it as a second screen, it's fine.

Is the next step a fully portable Cintiq tablet?

It doesn't take much imagination to see a portable Cintiq, does it? Although there are some excellent apps for tablets, it would be great to be able to use just good ol' Photoshop on a portable device and with a decent pen. I guess only time will tell if Wacom plans to give us such a device.

When did you become a Wacom Evangelist, and why?

I joined in 2009. I had already worked with Wacom on trade fairs and digital art events for a few years and was very happy when it invited me to join the programme.

What Wacom kit do you use?

I'm currently using an Intuos4 L to create my digital graphic novel *The Wormworld Saga* on a 27-inch screen in my studio. I recently switched to a mobile workstation and when I'm on the road I use an Intuos5 M tablet with it.



Based in Germany, when not working on his comic project The Wormworld Saga, Daniel's a freelance illustrator.

www.daniellieske.com

DETAILS

Features

- High-res 13.3in
- HD 1,920x1,080
- LED display
- 178° viewing angle
- 16.7 million colours
- Slim design
- New Pro Pen with 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity
- Four customisable Express Keys, Rocker Ring and Home Button for shortcut access
- Can be used left or right handed
- Detachable stand adjusts to three working angles
- Simple setup to Mac or PC with new 3-in-1 cable system

System Requirements

PC: Windows 7, Vista (SP2 or later), XP (SP3), 32 or 64-bit configurations, DVI or VGA port, USB port and optical drive.
Mac: OS X 10.5.8 or later, note that Intel-based platforms only are supported. DVI or VGA port, or appropriate Mini Display Port to DVI adaptor. Spare USB port and optical drive.

Rating





The Art of Epic

MIGHTY SMALL Discover how Blue Sky Studios brought an unseen world to life for the big screen

Author Tara Bennett **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £25
Web www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Blue Sky Studio's paradoxically titled **Epic** is the latest in a long line of films that investigate the microscopic world around us. It tells the story of Mary Katherine, a young girl whose mad scientist father goes missing in the woods. She goes looking for him, and finds herself transported to a tiny world in which the hummingbird-riding Leafmen vie with the evil Boggan for supremacy.

As adventure stories go, it's your standard coming-of-age fairy tale. But where **Epic** comes to life is in its sumptuously realised vision of the tiny woodland realm, which blends real-world creatures and plants with fantasy heroes and villains. As Tara Bennett's in-depth art of... book points out, the film was created from a rather more intimate perspective than standard Hollywood CG movies.

The book begins by looking at the characters who inhabit both the real world and the microcosm of the forest floor. Professor Bomba – Mary Katherine's father – is a slight character whose noggin is adorned with geeky gizmos that signpost his scientific background. Mary Katherine herself is less cartoony, and as art director Michael Knapp points out her story arc is expressed through her hooded top: she starts with the hood up and sleeves down, but as she develops the hood comes down and the sleeves go up.

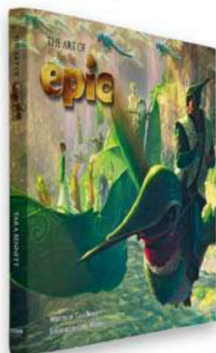
The Leafmen are designed in sharp contrast to the humans, taking influence from samurai warriors and medieval knights. A chapter deals with their leader, Ronin, who started out as a Robert Mitchum-esque world-weary warrior, but then developed into a smooth-skinned and more youthful character. Dagda, who is Ronin's nemesis and leader of the Boggan, began as a bat-like creature, before the art team settled on making him more rat-like.

Essential to all **Epic**'s adventures is the forest backdrop, and Blue Sky went

on numerous expeditions into the woods near its Connecticut base. The temptation to present the forest in tilt-shift macro photography was explored, but as Knapp explains it was rejected in favour of more conventional photography. "We want the audience to feel like they're in the same world as the Leafmen," he says.

We're not entirely convinced that **Epic** will stand shoulder-to-shoulder – or antenna-to-antenna – with similar movies; the project feels far too straightforward a take on good versus evil when the similarly plotted *Spirited Away* blurred the lines. However, this book makes the world and its residents look incredibly detailed and rich, and it certainly made us see flora and fauna in a different light.

RATING

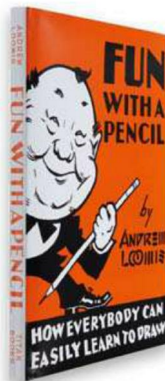


Further reading...

Perfect your drawing skills, then bond with your father over some classic art

Fun with a Pencil

Author Andrew Loomis
Publisher Titan Books **Price** £30
Available Now
RATING

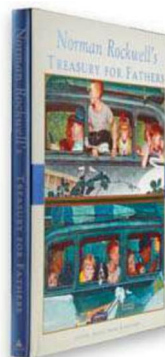


Titan Books' mining of American illustrator Andrew Loomis' back catalogue continues. **Fun with a Pencil** joins reprints of *Creative Illustration* and *Successful Drawing*, and they're obviously selling rather well. The page-by-page facsimile of **Fun with a Pencil** does exactly what it says on the cover, and it includes tutorials that build nicely from simple shapes and stick men, to dimensional and emotive human beings.

Andrew's strengths lie in his artistic abilities, as well as his writing, which remains funny to this day. The basics of drawing haven't changed in the past 70 years, so there's not much here that you wouldn't find in a £10 tutorial book. But brush the odd racial stereotypes aside and you've got a fascinating and very readable time capsule.

Norman Rockwell's Treasury for Fathers

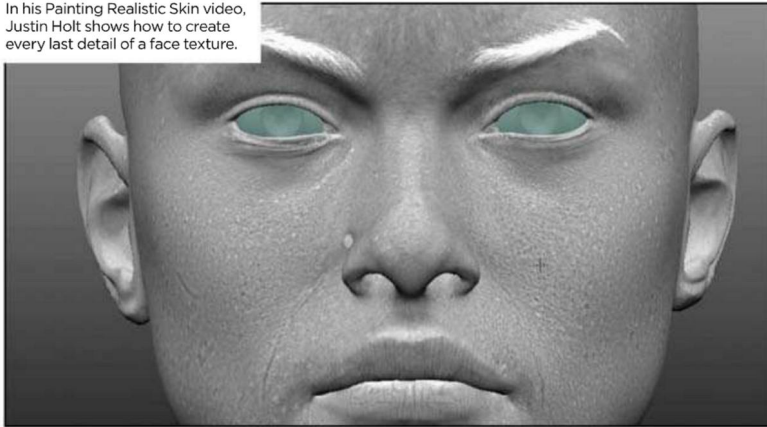
Author Susan Homer and the Rockwell Estate
Publisher Abrams **Price** £16
Available Now
RATING



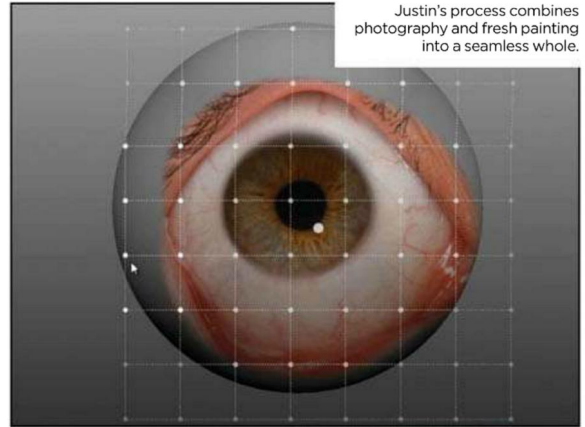
Admittedly, we thought Norman Rockwell's *Treasury for Fathers* might be a little twee. It's a compendium of over 100 paintings and drawings from one of our favourite 20th century illustrators, combined with stories, poems and letters from luminaires such as Ted Hughes and JM Barrie.

The unifying theme is dads, and our initial trepidation soon wore off when we realised what a brilliant idea it is. Putting Rockwell's art side-by-side with such beautiful text brings out the best qualities of both, especially the artist's ability to capture emotion and expression. Although the tome is designed as a father's day gift, it can be taken as a lovingly crafted way to look back at the master's work.

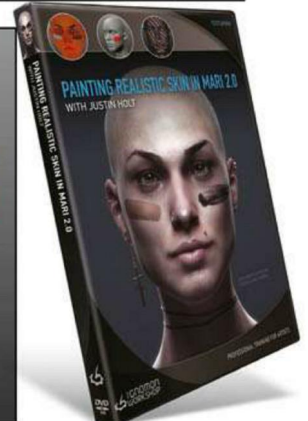
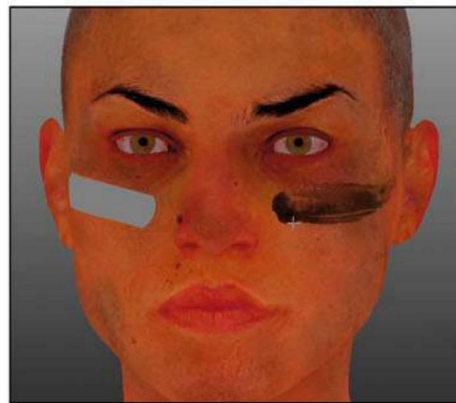
In his Painting Realistic Skin video, Justin Holt shows how to create every last detail of a face texture.



Justin's process combines photography and fresh painting into a seamless whole.



In Justin's research phase, he compiles and edits photos to get the skin type he needs.



Painting Realistic Skin in Mari 2.0

EXTREME CLOSE-UP Discover how to paint for the movies as texture artist Justin Holt creates every pore of a CG character's skin

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$79 **Format** DVD/Download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Artists of all abilities acknowledge that human skin is one of the most difficult surfaces to depict convincingly. It's all too easy to paint figures that look plastic, while adding just the right level of detail to make your character look their age is tricky to say the least. The ability to paint such complex textures is rare enough that artists with good technical and observation skills can profit from their knowledge, as Justin Holt has proven in his own career.

In a video workshop lasting over five hours, Justin shows in exhaustive detail how he applies his art skills to the demanding field of painting skin textures to grace computer-generated characters, such as the ones Justin painted for 2008's film *The Incredible Hulk*. His tool of choice is Mari, which you might crudely describe as a 3D version of Photoshop, enabling you to paint directly onto CG models using brushes and layers.

DETAILS

Topics covered

- Painting on CG models
- Correcting photo reference
- Painting the skin colour
- Treatment of different head regions
- Layering the skin with maps
- Painting eye textures

Length

333 minutes

Rating



Justin's process starts before he even picks up Mari, however, as he preps his photo reference by removing extraneous visual information. Painting is a combination of using photo fragments and his own brushes, and he constantly refers back to the photos. He shows how to build up the various maps (essentially images with specific roles in describing the skin, such as colour and specularity). He repeats the whole process for the eyes, which is always the most important part to get right. Narrated by an artist who knows his subject inside out, the video is dense with information and acts as a robust guide to the programs being used.

While you'll certainly increase your understanding of how skin behaves in light, the emphasis in this video is firmly on pro techniques and getting the most out of your software. If you've any ambitions on transferring your skills into movies or video games then this masterclass gives you the best possible foundation.

ARTIST PROFILE

JUSTIN HOLT

After working on lighting for the animated film *Happy Feet*, Justin moved into painting textures for the 2007 film *The Kingdom*. His career took off, giving him the chance to texture the Hulk and the Abomination for *The Incredible Hulk* and the Owlship in *Watchmen*. Justin also contributed textures to ILM animated feature *Rango* before moving to Vancouver to join visual effects studio Image Engine. The movies he's working on currently include *R.I.P.D.* and Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium*.



www.justinmichaelholt.com

From Mario to Mortal Kombat, can you spot all the cameos?



Wreck-It Ralph

BLOCKBUSTER The gentle giant guise is updated by Disney for a modern generation of retro games fans

Distributor Disney **Certificate** PG **Price** £12 (Blu-ray, £16; Blu-ray 3D, £18) **Available** 2 June

Disney has been busy flashing its cash recently. In 2006 it bought Pixar, Marvel in 2009, and Lucasfilm last year. Although Star Wars fans are yet to find out if Darth Vader will receive a Mickey Mouse makeover, the Disney Empire hasn't eradicated the high culture of the conquered Pixar. In fact, for Disney's 52nd animated film the House of Mouse has clearly learnt a lot from the smarter animation studio.

Wreck-It Ralph is sometime Simpsons director Rich Moore's first feature film. Set within the world of arcade games, Ralph is the Donkey Kong-armed foe of golden-hammer wielding Fix It Felix Jr. Disenchanted with 30 years of bashing bricks about, Ralph wants to be the good guy for once, so he ventures out of his world in search of a medal – a symbol of heroism.

His journey takes him to the perfectly visualised worlds of the other

games in the arcade, via Game Central Station. His dated 8-bit home is simply portrayed, the inhabitants designed from square shapes who move in stiff judders. Created by artist Cory Loftis, the Halo-esque game Hero's Duty is dark and gritty, a more physically realistic world. Sugar Rush, meanwhile, where Ralph befriends the ostracised cart racer Vanellope von Schweetz, is a cornucopia of candy-coloured sugary treats, constructed by artist Lorelay Bove.

Like the best of Pixar's films, there's depth behind the gloss. Cory and Lorelay used the architecture of Daniel Libeskind and Antoni Gaudí for inspiration and eagle-eyed viewers will enjoy spotting the all-star cast of classic game characters. With the updating of the staple Beauty and the Beast tale and its memorable look, this is the best animated film Pixar didn't make.

RATING



This retelling of Beauty and the Beast is the best animated film Pixar never made.

The many faces of Vanellope, the film's heroine and artist Lorelay's creation.



ARTIST INTERVIEW

LORELAY BOVE

The Wreck-It Ralph artist on the benefits of a sweet tooth

What did you do on the film?

I was the key designer of Sugar Rush. Everything from the characters to the style of the world.

What inspired you to create this candy-filled world?

When I interned at Pixar, they gave me an assignment for my portfolio: Hansel and Gretel. They're really big on research, so they asked me to look into the subject in great detail. This makes the subject feel stronger and more genuine – and that's when I thought of using a style similar to that of Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí for the gingerbread house.

So you used this research to design Sugar Rush?

Exactly. When Wreck-It Ralph director Rich Moore pitched the idea of having a sugar-coated candy-land world in the movie, I already had lots of research in my portfolio. They pitched my ideas to John Lasseter and he really liked it.

We heard that you flew out to a candy convention. Is that true?

The largest candy convention in the world! We took a lot of pictures. We learned about the different surfaces and textures of candy because we thought it would be great to cover King Candy's castle in all different kinds of sugar.

What was it like creating the candy-themed racers?

That was a lot of fun. Each of the racers is based on a different candy or flavour, but the cars were designed first, so I had to create each character based on their car's design. So there's a peanut butter racer, a tiramisu racer and a candy corn racer, as well as racers inspired by cherry pie and ice cream popsicles.

Who's your favourite?

Taffyta. I came up with a lot of designs, but Rich Moore said, "Make her the girl from school that would hate Vanellope."



A CalArts graduate, Lorelay interned at Disney and Pixar before working on Tangled and Wreck-It Ralph.

www.lorelaybove.blogspot.co.uk

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Lighting adds a thick layer of atmosphere to each space, and plays a part in the gameplay.



Metro: Last Light

LIGHT 'N' SHADE Take part in an intelligent first-person shooter where stealth tactics play a big part in gameplay

Format PC, PS3, Xbox 360 **Publisher** Deep Silver **Price** £40 **Available** Now
Web www.enterthemetro.com

Last Light is the sequel to 2010 release Metro 2033, and casts the player as returning protagonist Artyom, a Russian living in Moscow's underground transport system following the outbreak of a world war. But whereas the first game was set in the dead of the nuclear winter that followed, Last Light sees the irradiated frost thawing as the first glimmers of sunlight pierce the ash cloud.

The setting has given 4A's artists more freedom to expand their palette, and the result is one of the most striking post-apocalyptic game landscapes we've ever seen. That destroyed beauty above ground, however, is matched by the dinginess found below, as you travel across the system encountering



Character models while not quite reaching Rage's standards, look astonishing for the most part.

settlements and the bases of two opposing armies struggling to control this new underground society. Built of debris, metro cars and pieces of technology and ephemera - given new meaning by a society that no longer sees the sun very often - each locale you arrive at, whether you're

shooting or talking, is bursting with personality and the artists have done an exceptional job of finding beauty within the sadness that abounds.

You'll take on missions along the way, attempting to undermine reinvigorated Nazi and Communist regimes while chasing a mysterious alien called, perhaps a little unoriginally, The Dark

One. You can choose to barrel in all guns blazing, or take your time and sneak through the shadows - light playing an important role here as you attempt to stay out of sight by extinguishing lamps along your way.

It may sound like an embarrassment of influences, but 4A has pulled off the difficult task of making them hang together convincingly. And with this and BioShock Infinite, there are encouraging signs of a resurgence of characterful, narrative-led adventures over gung-ho shooting.

RATING



Also look at...

Take part in an ambitious TV sci-fi tie-in, then relax by dodging spikes and blades



Defiance

Format PC, PS3, Xbox 360
Publisher Trion Worlds
Price £32
Available Now
RATING

Defiance is both a futuristic western TV series set in the titular town and a massively multiplayer third-person shooter. It's an ambitious project that could set a new standard for TV and video game crossovers

Unfortunately, at launch it falls far short of its potential. While the TV series' distinctive leads and special effects lend Defiance an atmosphere all its own, the game crowbars the fiction into a me-too Massively Multiplayer Online Game. It's not a bad game, it's just not the revolutionary experience the hype would suggest.

Gunplay is satisfactory, taking its cues from Halo and Borderlands, and the sense of being part of a larger fight is bolstered by the lack of instancing. Yet there's little need to work with your fellow players, while any sense of



scale is compromised by the atrocious draw distance. The expansive game world can occasionally offer up some beautiful scenes, but you'll have to squint through the pea soup to appreciate them.

Badland

Format iOS
Publisher Frogmind
Price £2.49
Available Now
RATING



You'd be forgiven for thinking Badland came from the same stable as the sombre Xbox 360 hit Limbo. The beautiful silhouette art style is evocative of that game, but here the backgrounds add a dash of colour with an illustrative style that calls to mind a graphic novel. It's a luxurious combination, and looks great on the iPad.

The studio responsible for it, Frogmind, was founded by former Trials Evolution devs, which sets high



expectations when it comes to satisfying controls. Unfortunately, the auto-runner gameplay is stunted by a halting, staccato feeling as you place your finger on the screen to make your strange bat-like creature fly, and let go to allow it to fall. The creature's erratic movement gives the impression of a struggling hatchling, which is charming to look at but less so to wrestle with when facing spinning blades, falling rocks and tight passageways. Yet despite this irritation, the game's enchanting graphics prove motivation enough to keep you pushing onwards.

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LOCATION International (Canada based) **RECENT PROJECTS** Comic Book Pencilling, Fernando Melek **WEB** www.pencilkings.com

Seattle-based artist Mark Behm takes a class in the basics of digital painting.



Pencil Kings

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM Look who's bringing affordable art tuition that works from the student's needs first!

Pencil Kings isn't an art studio in the traditional sense, although it does create high-end digital and traditional art. It's a group of international professional artists that run online courses – but then it isn't a traditional online school either. For a start, students create their own curriculum, and don't pay the exorbitant fees associated with public schools in the US.

Both these points are essential to why Mitch Bowler founded Pencil Kings. Having graduated in his native Canada, his first and second choices of US university meant international student fees on top of already steep tuition fees. He gave up on the idea, but the sting of fees – together with that feeling of discouragement – has stayed with him ever since.

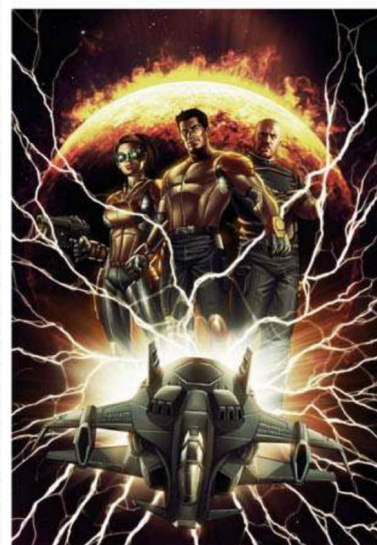
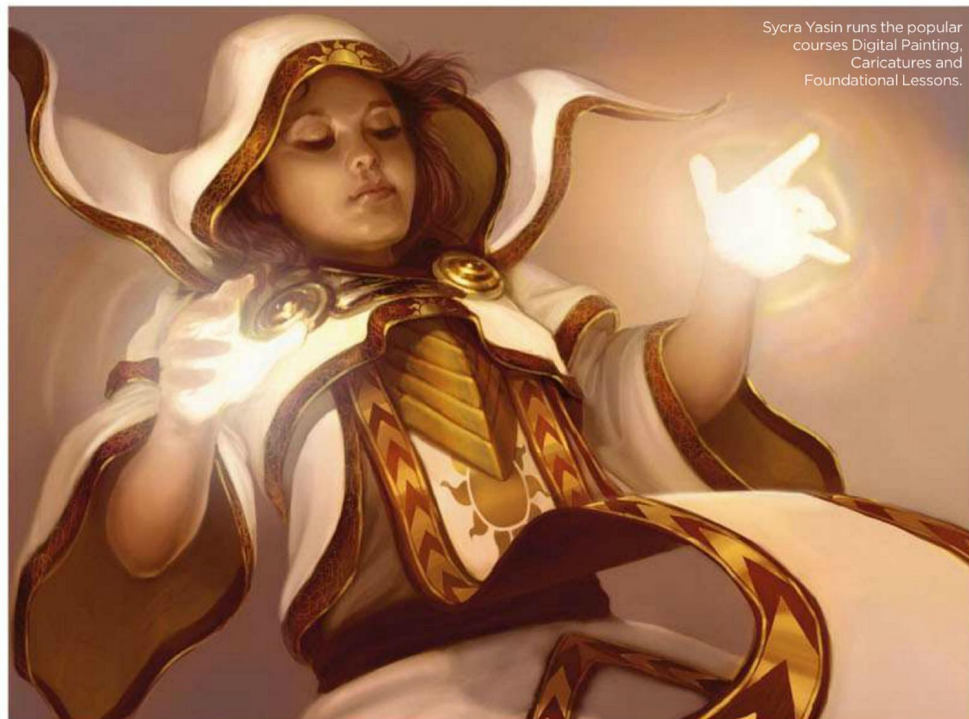


"The financial benefits of the site have always come second to the mission of providing quality content," he says. "We're dedicated to keeping the cost affordable so that no one is excluded who wants to learn with us. Currently, 100 per cent of the proceeds that come in through the Pencil Kings members gets reinvested back into the website by paying wages for the artists and support staff and getting the word out about the site."

With more talented tutors now on the books, Mitch does less teaching nowadays. "Having worked with hundreds of artists overseas and with remote art teams, it put us in a position where we knew that we needed to be organised to handle file deliveries, time zones and working processes," he explains. But the school is only as good as its teachers, and each pro artist at Pencil Kings has been chosen for the students' specific needs.

"What we aim to do is to listen to the Pencil Kings Community and see what kind of lessons they're most interested in," Mitch says. "We'll then try to find a

Sycra Yasin runs the popular courses Digital Painting, Caricatures and Foundational Lessons.



Fernando Melek takes the Comic Pencilling course, covering comic covers and panels.

ARTIST INTERVIEW

SYCRA YASIN

Pencil King's concept artist offers his hard-earned advice

When did you start working for Pencil Kings?

I've been working for Pencil Kings for about a year now.

Please single out a couple of things that you do there

I try to approach things from the eyes of the beginner, not the experienced or intermediate artist. I still remember the frustration I felt when I started on my journey to become an artist, and I try to hold on to that feeling whenever I'm making a video.

What are you most proud of in your career so far and why?

I love seeing feedback from artists who have watched videos I have made and have found them helpful. Specifically, I'm most proud of my Ultimate Guide to Photoshop available on www.pencilkings.com, because that one tutorial is probably the most helpful digital painting guide out there that I'm aware of (and I've seen my fair share).

What advice do you have for someone wanting to be a concept artist?

First, develop your 'hand skills', meaning drawing, understanding perspective, anatomy, form, values and so on. Second, develop your ideas. Good ideas in this business are even better than good drawing skills, so make sure you work on building up your visual library. Travelling, watching movies and playing games can help a lot. And finally, be part of the artistic community: join forums, make friends online. So many jobs in this field are the result of having a strong network of friends. It doesn't hurt to have a buddy you can work on foundational skills with. It's also important to have your name out there. A lot of jobs will come your way simply because people know you. Just being good isn't enough if no one knows your name.



Sycra is an artist who teaches the lessons Digital Painting, Caricatures and Foundational Lessons at Pencil Kings.

www.sycra.net



PROJECTS Ultimate Guide to Photoshop, Posing Your Characters, Car Caricatures



Another piece by Mark. Students who like fantasy warriors and dragons should be in for a treat.

matching artist to produce that lesson. This enables us to get specialists on certain topics, which leads to more visually interesting lessons and some amazing insights from the artist about their workflow."

So far every course has been a success, with Laurie Breitzkreuz and Sycra Yasin being particularly popular. With a traditional background in art, Laurie offers a chance for digital painters to get their hands dirty in the name of art. "I try to encourage people to try their hand at traditional art," she says, "whether they're new and inexperienced, or seasoned artists."



“We're able to get some amazing insights from the artist about their workflow”

Over the past year, Sycra has guided students through the making of such pieces as his Lizard Man Barbarian, and other images full of action and movement.



With the advent of technology, some say the classical art forms are falling to the wayside. I advocate keeping traditional media and methods alive."

The tutors are also learning new things and becoming inspired on the job. For a recent tutorial on Superman, Fernando Melek delved into an unfamiliar territory. "The tutorial was my first example of explaining to a camera the way I work, so it was a pretty comprehensive tutorial," he says. "I think the highlight was just that - being able to see the whole range of existing possibilities for making an illustration."

Working for a student-centred organisation, it's no surprise that all tutors offer similar student-specific advice. LaurieB: "Find the things you like most in the world around you and explore putting your own spin on them. Whether it's character-based mechs and robots, environments or lighting, go for what you're naturally drawn to. Make it your craft, and don't worry about being a jack of all trades. Otherwise you risk being only a watered-down version of the greater artist you could be."

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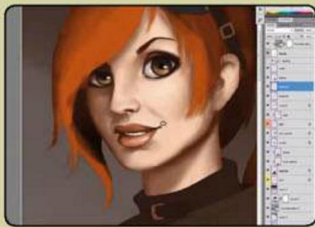
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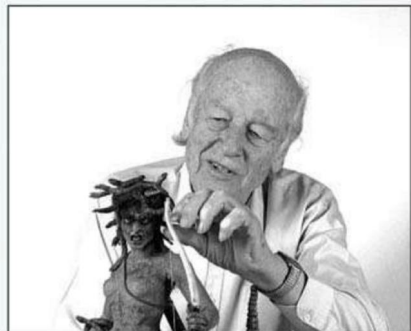
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News

Ray Harryhausen remembered

The pioneer of stop-motion animation who gave life to some of cinema's most imaginative creatures, has died at the age of 92. Today, we remember the artist...



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