CLIP STUDIO
PAINT

Dave Gibbons:
Using Clip Studio Paint To Create Comic Book Art

Image: Dan Dare Cover

Dave Gibbons - Comic Book Creator in his own words.

How long have you been in this profession?

I have been drawing and writing comics since 1973, so that is 45 years, now. That was when I went full time professional. I had done one or two shorter things before that. But really, I think my career began in 1973.

What are your most important accomplishments?

I suppose the thing that I am best known for, is being the artist and co-creator of Watchmen, which I did with Alan Moore. I drew a Superman story ["For the Man Who Has Everything"] with Alan as well, which seems to be a perennial favourite. I co-created the character Rogue Trooper for 2000 A.D. magazine. I worked on Doctor Who for three or four years.

I co-created and drew the Martha Washington series with Frank Miller. I worked on Green Lantern and Green Lantern Corps for DC Comics. I have written some Batman and Superman stories, including Batman vs. Predator. And, I worked on an Alien story with [Hellboy creator] Mike Mignola. I was Comics Laureate in the U.K. for a couple of years, which was a chance to promote comics in education. I was given an honorary doctorate by The University of Dundee in Scotland. In 2018, I won the Will Eisner Hall of Fame Award at San Diego Comic Con and the Harvey Kurtzman Hall of Fame Award at the New York Comic Con. Those are the achievements and accomplishments that come to mind.

## What kind of projects do you create concept art for?

Largely, for comic strip continuity. Usually, I do the artwork in black and white, and it remains that way, or is coloured by a specialist colourist (In particular, my friend Angus McKay, who sees things very much the way I do in terms of colour). I do the odd advertising job or promotional job. I do a lot of consultancy work now for various tech companies like MadeFire, who do motion books for the iPad and other devices. I am also involved as a Creative Consultant with Magic Leap, who have some amazing 3-D technology. I do some bits and pieces of game design as well.

Watchmen Promotional Image

What is your equipment set up?

I have a MacBook Pro and a Wacom Cintiq 27-inch drawing tablet. I have a Tabmate controller, which is a great little gadget for making the drawing process [in Clip Studio Paint] easier (it is completely programmable). I have an external 30 inch Apple display that I use as my as my main display. I have a large table top scanner, and an Epson printer. I also have an iPad Pro. I find the iPad Pro very useful for doing sketches on when you are away from the computer. I have the iOS version of Clip Studio Paint installed on the iPad. It is great to be able to swap files backwards and forwards [between the iPad and computer]. I still draw a bit on pencil and paper; I sometimes will do pencils using Clip Studio Paint, print those out, and ink them using traditional methods, if I am doing artwork for a commission or there is some particular reason I need a piece of hard artwork.
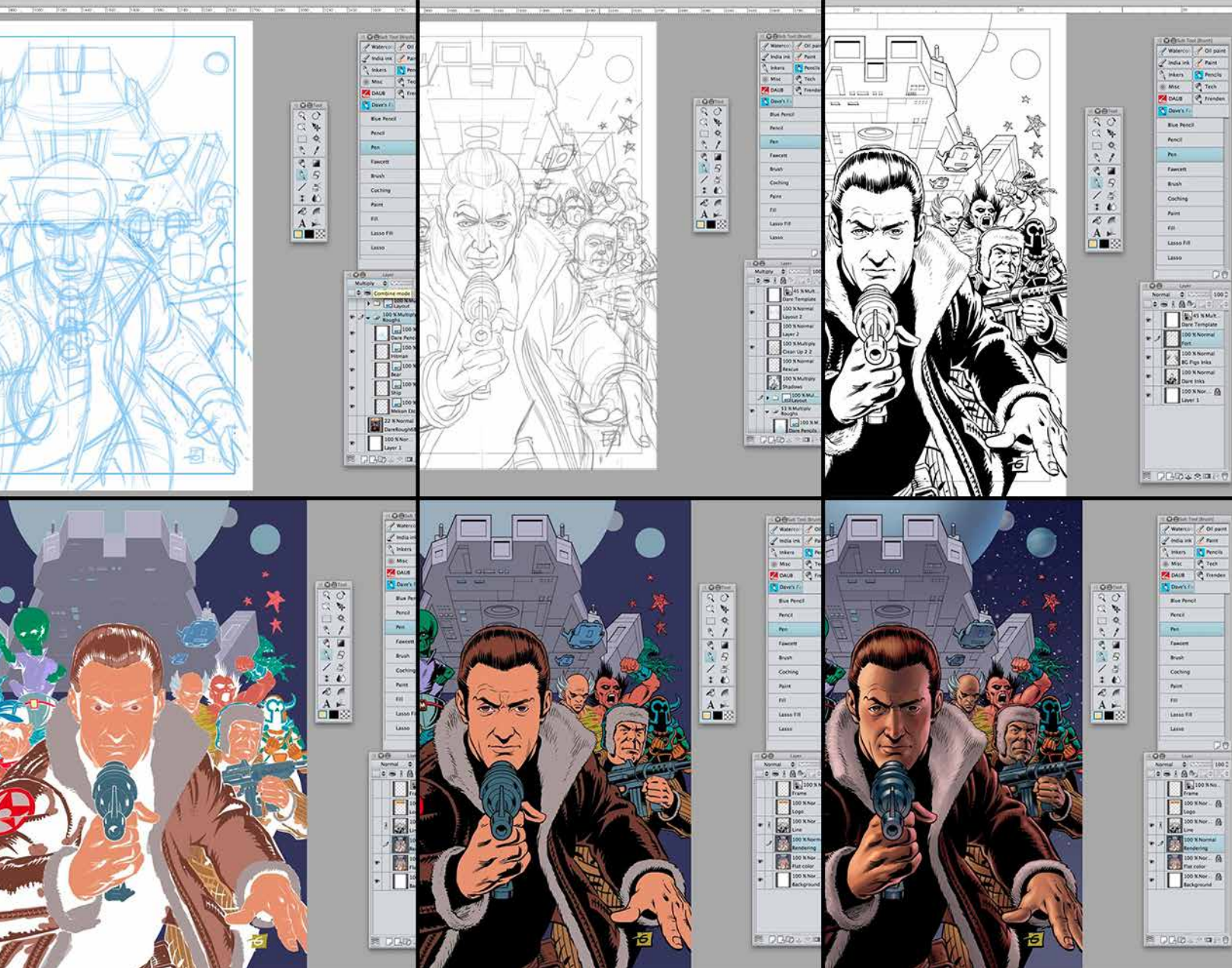
Cover art creative process

What is your comic creation workflow?

First, I would read the script (unless I'm writing...in which case, I would write the script). Then, I would do thumbnail drawings of each page; tiny postage-stamp size impressions of roughly what I want to be on each page to start to try to get an idea of how the pages look together and how they are composed. I would then do slightly bigger roughs, where I draw everything out loosely — just to get the flow of the images and story. Then, I would do more finished pencils, and ink them. Finally, I would letter the inked drawings and add colour. That was the workflow using traditional media, and then later using a hybrid system where lettering and colouring would be done on the computer. Now, I do the whole thing, from the thumbnails right through to the final lettered and coloured pages, in Clip Studio Paint.

What's your history with Clip Studio Paint?

I have been using a computer as part of my comic art workflow since the early 1990s, originally for colouring. I would do my art traditionally on paper with pen, ink, and brushes. I would then scan it, and apply digital colours using Adobe Photoshop. Later on, I would use Adobe Illustrator to do lettering and other graphic design aspects. I have always been looking for software that makes the job of creating comics easier. I was absolutely thrilled when I came across Manga Studio (the original name for the English language version of Clip Studio Paint), because it was designed from the ground up to address specific problems and needs in the production of comic book artwork. The minute I saw it, I started using it. I have since followed its evolution.

One year at San Diego, I introduced myself to the American re-sellers of the program. I mentioned Watchmen, and they were quite excited to meet me. They asked if I would be interested in promoting the software. I have always been an enthusiast, and if I come across something I really like, I am always telling people how it is something they should try out. It is exactly how I felt with the program. I remain a staunch supporter. I continue to do promotional work for Clip Studio Paint, and I use the program to do most of my work, whether it is in black and white, or in colour. It has a wonderful tool set and is very stable, so I use it a lot.

Grordbort Final Colour

What are your favorite features in Clip Studio Paint?

First, I love the tools. I love how closely they emulate and imitate real world tools. I have my toolbox set up to use the digital equivalents of exactly the tools I had come use to in the analog world. I just love the responsiveness that you get from the pencils, pens, and brushes.

I also like the perspective ruler. The way that I draw uses a lot of traditional two and three point perspective. Although I am perfectly capable of doing that by hand, it is a very time consuming business, and it can impede your workflow. In Clip Studio Paint, perspective is simple: you set your vanishing points, and your lines will then snap to the grid. And, you can import 3D models that can fit within that 3D space. This is a wonderful time saver when drawing backgrounds or mechanical objects.

The third thing that I really like, is the way you can colour in Clip Studio Paint using your line art as a reference layer. This means you can paint on a layer below the line artwork, so that when it is printed, you will never get white space. You will have colour over the whole page, and the black lines always print on top. This means the art will look consistent, which is a tremendous time saver, compared to using the Photoshop selection tools or fill buckets, or anything like that.

Those I think are my three favourite features.

What Clip Studio Paint features allow you to distinguish your art?

I like to think that you cannot really tell what I have drawn traditionally, and what I have drawn digitally. So, that helps me to keep my style consistent and make it clearly recognizable and distinguishable as my art.

Are you more efficient today compared to when you used traditional comic book production tools?

Yes, I am. As I said, things like the perspective rulers save a real mountain of time if you are doing drawings involving buildings and mechanical backgrounds. When it comes to colouring, the reference layers make that process much quicker. Also, the fact that you do not have to scan stuff in - you create it completely in the computer - is a tremendous time saver. And, the ability to put out fully finished print-ready work is what it is all about. I am definitely more efficient today. This perhaps could have gone with my favourite features: I really like the way you can import references using the Sub-View palette. I can collect all my photographic references in there. It is a wonderful way of getting all your reference images on screen with the drawing that you are making from them. You can flip between them and increase and decrease their size. And, you can pick colours from them if you like, which is useful.

Page process from DR. WHO
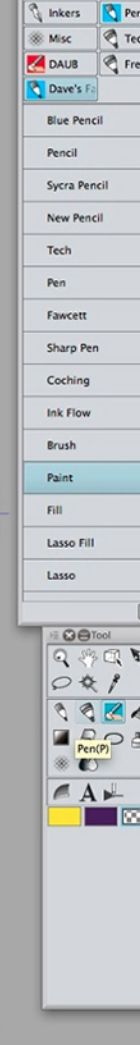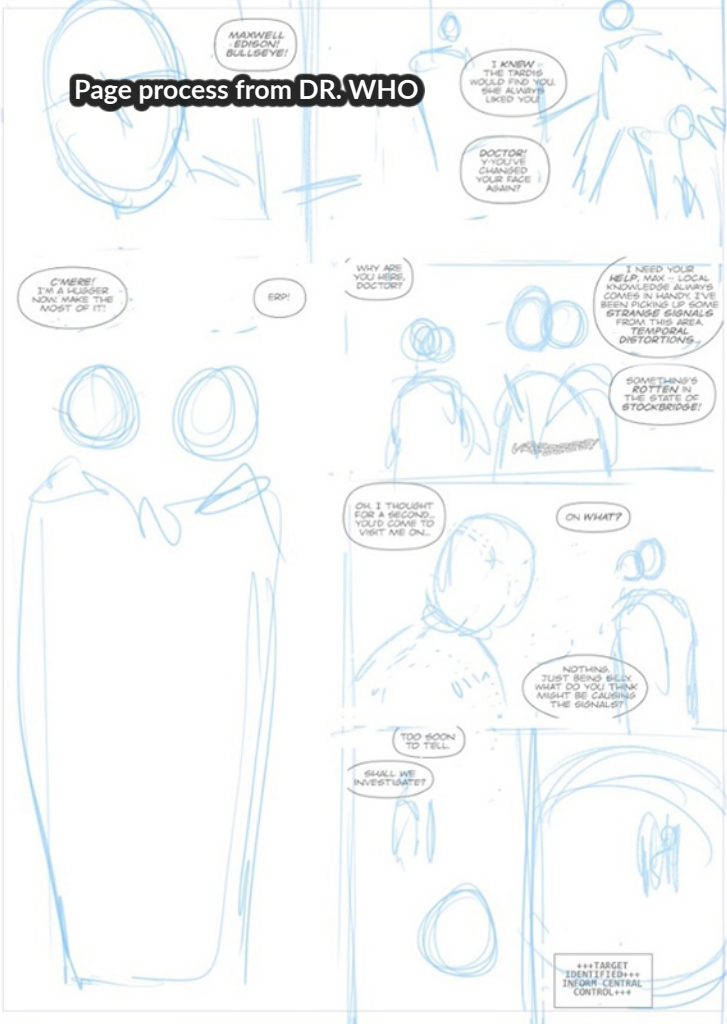
Is it possible to get the same results with other software?

I suppose you could. I have done a lot of work in Photoshop, but what I like about Clip Studio Paint is it is focused features for the needs of comic book or manga artists. So you probably could get the same results. But, why take the bus if you have a Ferrari?

How do you feel about Clip Studio Paint?

I think Clip Studio Paint is an always evolving piece of software that specifically addresses the needs of comic book and manga artists. Certainly, I can think of very little in it that I would want to change. It is very stable. I have very rarely been able to crash Clip Studio Paint. It does back up saves as well, which is very useful. I feel it is a very reliable, very necessary part of my comic drawing arsenal. In fact, I cannot imagine that I would probably like drawing comics, if I was not able to use Clip Studio Paint.

Do you use other tools such as Photoshop when designed for production? What synergistic effects do you gain from incorporating CSP together with other tools in your workflow?

Sometimes, I will print stuff out and finish it manually. Very occasionally, I will use Photoshop if I need colour adjustment. I use Illustrator occasionally to do lettering, because I am still used to doing it in Illustrator. Sometimes, if you are doing logos and things like that, I find it easier to stay with that software rather than to learn how to do it in Clip Studio Paint. I also occasionally use Poser, which can be useful to get lighting on figures and objects. SketchUp is a very useful and simple piece of 3D software that you can block out mechanical objects in. I will occasionally import files from that into Clip Studio, manipulate them, and use them as the basis for it for a drawing. I have experimented with Zbrush. However, I am not very proficient with that. I think that the range of features in other software accounts for about 10 percent of my workflow. I mainly use Clip Studio Paint for all of my needs. That is really the essential part of my workflow.

WOOOAAAAAHH!

SLIGHTY MISJUDGED THAT...

WAR'S BEEN ANOTHER CENTRAL TENET OF *2000AD*. YOUR SPECIES SEEMS VERY KEEN ON IT, SO I THOUGHT IT BEHOLDEN OF ME TO SHOW YOU WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE SEVERAL CENTURIES INTO THE FUTURE.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT'S NOT PRETTY.

WHETHER IT'S ON *PLUTO*...

VAPE 'EM!

GEEEEE!

...OR *ARARAT*...

KROOL AT THREE O'CLOCK, BAD COMPANY!

...OR EVEN YOUR PLANET'S *EASTERN FRONT*, THE GENERAL STANCE I'VE MAINTAINED OVER THE YEARS IS -- WAR: WHAT IS IT *GOOD FOR? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!*

WELL, APART FROM THE *THRILLS*, OF COURSE!

Would you recommend Clip Studio Paint to artists within this industry?

Yes, I absolutely would. I do whenever I speak to other artists, or whenever I get the opportunity to mention Clip Studio Paint on social media. Indeed, an amazing number of people do use Clip Studio Paint, these days. I have heard very few complaints. So, I am quite happy to recommend it, because I always feel that I am doing artists a favour, rather than recommending something that is going to give them problems.

Do you have any words of inspiration you would like to share with new comic artists?

Wow! I don't know about inspiration…. You must learn to draw. Whether you do it traditionally or digitally, it does not really matter. Do not fool yourself that any software — even one as comprehensive as Clip Studio — is ever going to do the work for you. You still have to do the drawing, you still have to understand how to see the world around you and depict it in a dramatic way. I would encourage people to do live and realistic drawings because that is a good way of enriching your visual store of images and understanding of the world around you.

I suppose to leave it on a Zen like note, always work from the general to the particular. Always get the design of the page right before you concentrate on the design of the pictures within the page. Always get the design of the individual pictures right before you start to worry about drawing the elements within the picture. Draw the most important elements first, the big gestures, the big shapes, and then move down towards the details. If you do it like that, it puts everything in its proper place in the hierarchy of the image. It also means that if you get something wrong you can correct it at an early stage, rather than do a huge detailed drawing that you then have to scrap. I think that would be my general advice.
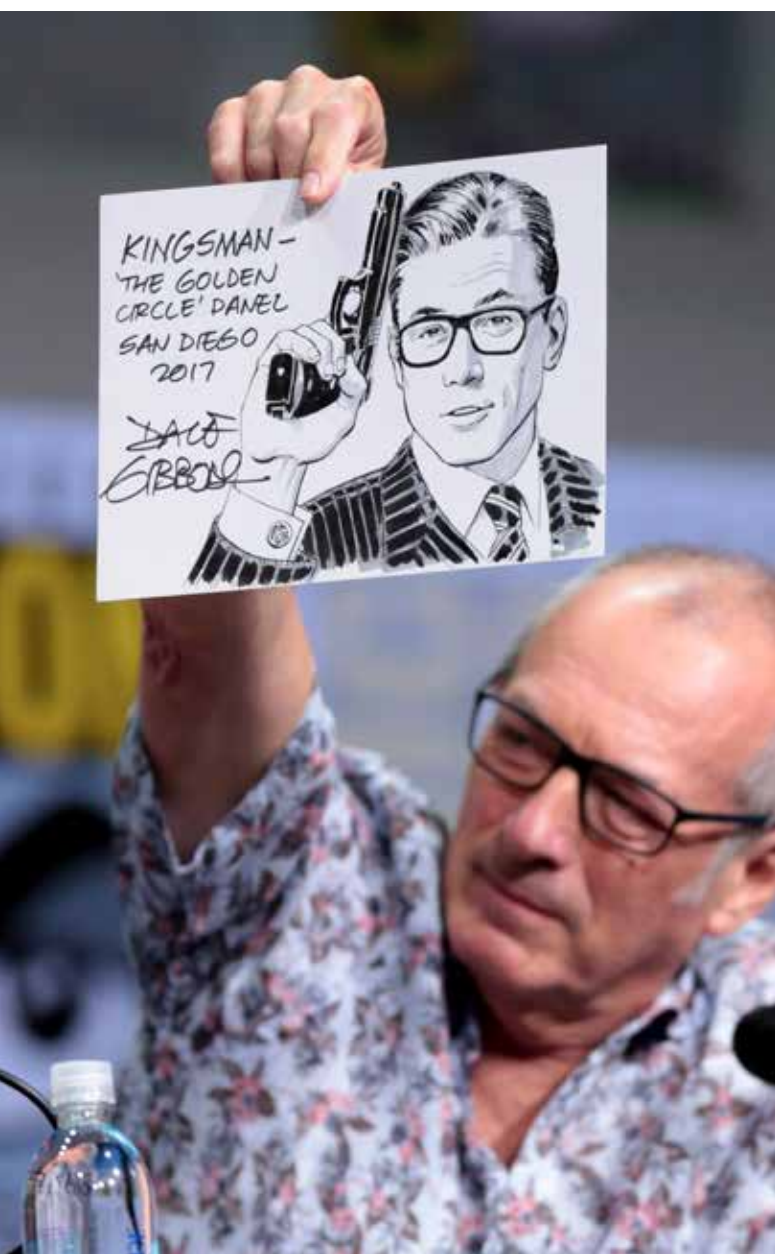
System Requirements

Microsoft Windows 7, 8.1 and 10 (32bit/64bit) or Apple mac OS 10.10, 10.11, 10.12, 10.13 & 10.14 // 300 MB space for application // 2.5 GB space for materials and assets (optional) // Pen tablet or tablet monitor that supports a pressure sensitive stylus. Wacom devices are recommended. // Physical version includes download link to installer // CD/DVD ROM drive (optional) for physical version // Internet connection for license authentication and access to download links.

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