



IndieCreator: Insights from a Newbie Comic Creator & Other Industry Pros

This is a series of bi-weekly columns by Bob Heske @ Heske Horror, creator of [The Night Projectionist](#), [Cold Blooded Chillers](#), and [2012: Final Prayer](#), featuring interviews and insights from indie comic artists, writers, creators, distributors and visionaries.

The Making of “Demented” with Artist Stephen Downey (Part 1)

[Stephen Downey](#) is an uber-talented Irish comic illustrator and musician. He has worked with having worked with Insomnia Publications, AAM/Markosia, Berserker, Comici Gael and Heske Horror. His co-creations include *Cancertown* with Cy Dethan and their upcoming book *Slaughterman's Creed*.

Recently Stephen ran a 2-part column in his [blog](#) about the detailed process of creating a single page of a comic (in this case, the “end times” dementia tale we paired up on for my doomsday anthology, *2012: Final Prayer*). With Stephen’s permission, I’m re-printing the blog entry here (1st of 2 parts). Enjoy!

(STEPHEN) I love seeing artist's process work, and I experimented a little with my approach while drawing the first page of Bob's “Demented” story. So here's a little of the 'script to finished page' process I used for this.



Stephen Downey

Step 1: Bob sent me his script

Page One

6 panels.

Panel 1:

Exterior Nursing Home. Night.
Snow is on the ground. A shoveled, paved walkway leads us to a brick building.
A sign outside: Rosebud Nursing Home.

DEX (OFF)

How's she doing today?

NURSE (OFF)

Not one of her better days.

Panel 2:

Interior nursing home, a drab, depressing room.

ANGLE ON – A 65-year old woman (AIDA) who sits in a chair by a window. She looks much older – her hair is white, her skin loose over her brittle bones. Her eyes are blank, her mind lost in a fog. There are blinds in the window, a crucifix on the wall, and ugly print wallpaper on the walls.

DEX (OFF)
Frankly, mom's best days are behind her.

NURSE (OFF)
That's true for us all, Dex.

Panel 3:

REVEAL – DEX, a 40-year old man with a boxer's sturdy build wearing a wool coat. Beside him is the attending nurse, DOTTIE, whose ample cleavage fills out her white uniform quite pleasantly.

Between them, hanging on the wall, is a calendar. It shows December with the 21st day circled.

NURSE
At least the world didn't end. December 21st, and we're still here.

DEX
Another false Apocalypse. Like 1984, Y2K, and Planet X in '03.

Panel 4:
ANGLE ON – Aida, in her own world, almost appears to be listening to their conversation.

NURSE
Looks like we'll be here to celebrate Christmas after all.

Panel 5:
Dexter watches Aida leave the room, admiring the view. His right hand reaches inside his coat.

DEXTER
Mm-hmm.

Panel 6:
Dexter pulls out a REVOLVER and stares maliciously at his mother with dementia.

DEXTER
Some of us will.

(STEPHEN) Apologies to Bob as some of the formatting is lost while transferring to the blog. Bob also embedded lots of really helpful reference material into the PDF, which were extremely helpful in picturing the scene as I read the script, but since I

didn't directly reference the images and this blog will be long enough as is, I've left them out.

Step 2: Create thumbnails to layout the panels and figures



(STEPHEN) Often on first pages, I like to make one panel larger than the rest to pull the reader into the scene. In this case though, there was a lot of information to portray; most of the panels are establishing shots of different characters and the last is the 'action' shot. I made panel 3 a little larger than the rest as it is establishing arguably the main protagonist (DEX),, but I had to make the other panels stand out clearly as well. The above jpeg is probably the actual size I drew it, at just a few inches tall.

Step 3: Pencilling (work in progress)



(STEPHEN) Drawn on 11 x 17 inch Bristol board. I looked up some photos of old ladies and I think the side view of Aida in panel 3 was pretty close to the image I found, as I needed to see which way glasses sit on the nose. But for the most part I didn't use much direct reference. I wanted Dex to look different from my other male characters, so he's based very loosely on Bruce Willis on panel 3, just to give me a starting point. I've heard he looks like everything from myself, to an angry Gary Barlow, so I don't think the likeness is too obvious.

Step 4: Working out panel 2

(STEPHEN) I'd just downloaded a free 3D modelling program called DAZ3D and was having a messaround with finding a nice pose for Aida on the chair:



I experimented with different angles, but ended up ignoring the model and just going for a simpler angle. As it was the first time Aida appeared in the story, I needed to establish the calendar on the wall, and leave room for dialogue. I also felt it was appropriate to start off with an almost mundane angle, then go for the more extreme angles when the action started on panel 6.

Step 5: Inking



(STEPHEN) I starting inking the piece, tidying up and refining the artwork using mostly the new Rotring ink pen I'd just picked up and a little bit of brush for the bigger black areas. This was my first time using the Rotring on a proper comic page, I felt the pen would bring a grittier look to the page, which I thought suited the story.

Step 6: Calendar

(STEPHEN) *The calendar in Bob's script pops up various times in the eight page story so I wanted to create it in Photoshop (simply using the text, select and fill tools) and impose it on the images so I wouldn't draw it too muddled trying to squeeze in all the numbers.*



I had forgotten to mention before, but although Bob's script mentioned the calendar appearing on panel 3, there was an angle I wanted to use later in the story that meant it was better to have it over Aida's head and so established on panel 2. An examples like this is why I find it's often helpful to layout an entire story, or at least scenes or issues at a time, rather than just before drawing each page.

Thanks Stephen. We'll continue with the "finishing touches" wrapping up the "Demented" page in our next bi-weekly column. In the meantime, be sure to read Stephen Downey's [art blog](#) to keep up with his latest happenings. And if anyone wants to hire him, he comes highly recommended! His email is stephendowneyonline@hotmail.com.

Bob Heske is creator of [The Night Projectionist](#), a vampire horror series by publisher [Studio 407](#) with film rights optioned by [Myriad Pictures](#). Through his Heske Horror shingle, Bob self-published his critically acclaimed horror series [Cold Blooded Chillers](#). Bob's trade paperback [Bone Chiller](#) (a "best of" CBC anthology) won a Bronze medal in the horror category at the 2009 Independent Publisher Book Awards. His "end times" anthology [2012: Final Prayer](#) was released on November 13, 2009. Bob's works are available online at Amazon.com Zaldiva.com, ComixPress, IndyPlanet, HeavyInk, SmallZone, DriveThruComics and YuDu.com (store). You can email Bob at info@coldbloodedchillers.com.



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The Making of “Demented” with Artist Stephen Downey (Part 2)

Stephen Downey, the artist of my “Demented” 8-page graphic tale in *2012: Final Prayer* (and several other new and notable comic graphic novels) continues sharing his saga of what’s involved in putting a page of script into comic art form. In our last column, Stephen took us through the painstaking steps to get the first completed page pencilled. Today, he takes us through the polish, inking and lettering stages.

Take it away, Stephen!

Step 7: Redraw

(STEPHEN) Looking at the scanned page, panel 5 was much too cluttered and needed a little more room for both dialogue and to make out what was happening:



I took the scanned panel and, on a new Photoshop file, moved things about and digitally sketched around it.



The characters looked a little squashed, and the panel wasn't going to fit into the original space anyway so I stretched it a little and turned in a blue colour.



Then I printed out the blue panel and inked over it with my pens/brush. When I rescanned it, I could quickly and easily take away the blue channel on Photoshop so I'm left with just the black line.

Step 8: Black and white artwork

(STEPHEN) I finished the inks on the rest of the page and digitally put panel 5 into place. Then I used the curve tool to get a really strong contrast between the black and white.



To get the wallpaper texture, I simply took a photo of my studio wallpaper; again using curves to bring out the pattern. I used the transform and perspective tool to fit the pattern to the walls as seamlessly as possible, and used my PS 'blood brush', which I'd created previously by scanning in an ink splat, to add the black splash at the bottom right (which actually has subtle story significance). I also didn't like how straight Aida looked on panel 2, so tilted in slightly just to make it more interesting, and added straight borders to the panels using the stroke tool.

Step 9: Greyscaling

(STEPHEN) The book is printed in black and white, which allowed for some greyscaling. I was originally just going to finish off with the stark black and white above, but I experimented with the greyscaling and thought it added to the art and atmosphere. All done in Photoshop CS4, in case anyone is interested.



10/ Lettering

(STEPHEN) *This was my first time lettering in Adobe Illustrator, previously just using Photoshop. It took a little bit of learning, but I managed to pick up the basics pretty quickly and much prefer the process and result compared to Photoshop. It's the ease of ability to change and play with the vector lines before finalising or distorting anything that makes the difference. Thanks to [this video](#) for the quick reference.*



And that's the page finished. Laying it out like this makes it look like a lot of work, but I didn't really notice as I enjoy it so much. Time wise I think I did the 8 pages over about 2 weeks.

So if you want to see the rest of the pages, [pick up](#) the 2012: Final prayer anthology. There is some great art and writing in the book and I really enjoyed it myself.

Thanks Stephen! Be sure to visit Stephen Downey's [art blog](#) to catch up on his latest happenings. As for his other artwork, here are some samples:



[Slaughterman's Creed from AAM Markosia](#)



[My New Best Friend from Berserker Comics](#)



[Cancertown from Insomnia Publications](#)

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