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# [Manga Studio vs Photoshop Part 1](#)

I'm gradually moving from Photoshop (PS) to MangaStudio (MS) and here's why: Workflow\*. Workflow isn't something I've ever seen covered in any how-to-draw comic books, a lot of that is to do with the fact that workflow becomes more important the more of the art you do yourself – in otherwords, if you're simply doing pencils workflow is less of an issue. When you're pencilling and inking (and maybe colouring and lettering) workflow becomes a pretty big deal. Every minute you shave out of workflow is another minute you can spend drawing (and every three/four hours you can shave out of workflow translates to another full page of drawing for me).

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So, as best as I'm able I'm gonna compare the two programs for the comic artist.

Here's my standard workflow:

- Scan an A4 document (something akin to pencils/layouts)
- Resize to fill US comic book size
- Add panel borders (chunky black borders over the top of the artwork)
- Convert pencils to blueline
- Print Document
- Ink (by hand, using a brush)
- Scan in
- Place scanned art onto a standard document template
- Remove blue lines

- Clean Scanned Art
- Add touchups (typically moving things around the page, correcting mistakes and resizing hands/heads or other things that I've drawn wrong)
- flatten and convert to b&w
- Save as a final document

Part 1 of this post will cover everything up until the print... [UPDATE: You can read part 2 here.](#)

## Scan & Resize



Photoshop

Create a new document – I have a couple of standard sized documents I use, for US I open my US comic sized template (which has the bleed/safe area marked off) this is a 400dpi full colour document. Scan the document (making sure I select which, of the several scanner options I have, and scan) – I scan at A4 Greyscale. Into a Greyscale Document

Place and resize the scanned art within the guidelines.(At this stage I have to be careful NOT to accidentally save the document because it'll save over my standard document template – I've done this before)



Manga Studio

Create a new document (lately I've been creating a new 'Story Document' rather than a single page – I simply tell it how long my story is and it'll create pages to match – including double page spreads) Scan the document (as I'd previously selected the scanner to use, this is a two click option with no worrying about making the incorrect choice)

After scanning you need to select how you want to use the art – normal or 2DLT – 2DLT means 2D Line and Tone, this is for converting a photograph into something that could be used for lineart. Not something I've been using, though, so I won't comment on it.

Place the document – resizing it (this is where Photoshop scores, MS doesn't do a live preview as you resize an image, so it's partly intuition and partly guesswork to get it right)



vs



Pretty much a draw when everything goes right, but more potential for mess-ups in PS which drags the process out much longer than it should (by minutes sometimes)

One interesting observation is that with PS you need to indicate what kind of file it is – whether it's B&W (for lineart), greyscale or full colour. Each choice dramatically increases the documents size and, therefore, how long it takes to do anything. With MS, on the other hand, you select BW, greyscale or full colour PER LAYER – keeping the filesize low. My PS template is full colour because I need to convert the line art to blue, with MS I DON'T.

## Add Panel Borders



Photoshop

I create a new blank layer above the lineart – this is my ‘borders’ layer.

I select the Marquee tool (M) and select ‘Fixed size – 5mm’ – then I draw a marquee where I think I’ll want a gutter. Once placed, I can now drag some guidelines over to the Marquee – they should snap to the Marquee (though sometimes I misjudged and I then have to select the Layer Select Tool to move the ruler). I do this for all of the guidelines on the vertical and then do any I need on the horizontal.

Once done, I can create Marquee’s using the guidelines to create my borders – making sure to move from FIXED SIZE to NORMAL marquees – I draw an additive marquee (that’s a normal marquee and while holding SHIFT to select multiple panels).

Drawing the borders now requires you to add a Stroke inside the selection – using EDIT->STROKE... – depending on the resolution of the image I usually go for either 20px or 30px



Manga Studio

I create a ‘PANEL RULER LAYER’

Selecting the panel ruler tool, and making sure the gutter is 5mm thick on both the horizontal and vertical, I then indicate where I want my gutters (it snaps automatically so it really is quicker than even drawing a line).

Make sure the layer properties indicate that I want a panel border of 1.4mm thick and then “rasterize” the layer. (This creates a new layer with the panel border drawn on it).



CLEAR WIN for MS. When everything goes right in photoshop it’s still a more fiddly operation, in MS – software, obviously designed for comic artists, I don’t think you could simplify the process any more. This saves several minutes every time you do it. (I should point out though, that it took some time to figure out how to do this in MS – one thing I’ve discovered is that MS is more like Windows software than Mac software – MS expects you to use the right hand mouse button for options, where PS doesn’t)

## Convert pencils to blueline



Photoshop

I have an action set up that will convert any layer into a blue layer – I click that and it processes it and bingo bango bongo it’s in non-repro blue.



Manga Studio

All MS layers can be assigned a colour – rather than b&w or grey. I simply select what colour I want to use – and you can use ANY colour.



WIN for MS. Why? I convert back and forth between colour and grey – with PS it’s a one-way

operation (well, I MAY be able to do it, but it'll be a nightmare of adjusting sliders). Also: the MS layer conversion is instant (since it's not actually altering anything – just how it's displayed) whereas the PS clearly processes the art, taking some time to think.

## Print Document



Photoshop

Select print preview. Since my template is already setup with print options, I simply print preview, make sure I have an A3 page in the printer and print.



Manga Studio

I've been able to print. But it's a nightmare of confusing options. I THINK they're all setup now, and I'm confident when I figure this out it'll be straightforward. But ugh.



vs



WIN for MS. That surprised you, huh? Ok, here's why: yes, it's confusing. Yes, I don't trust that I've done the right thing until I see a print out ... BUT... a) it's FASTER to render the print and send to the printer (because, it's multiple layers or a greyscale document – even if one of those layers is displaying as blue – as compared to PS rendering down multiple layers of a full colour document) b) like other things in MS, once I figure it out it'll be a doddle. (Though it does highlight just how confusing some of the options are... but the fact that it renders to print much faster and I can get on with doing something else is pretty awesome...)

And, [part 2 tomorrow \(or later today...\)](#)

\*And here's what an online dictionary says about workflow:

1. The flow or progress of work done by a company, industry, department, or person.
2. The rate at which such flow or progress takes place.

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By [PJ](#) – 10th December, 2009

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## 7 Responses

Stay in touch with the conversation, subscribe to the [RSS feed for comments on this post](#).

1.  *Jim Campbell* says

Fascinating stuff, PJ. I've suspected for a while now that I've barely scratched the surface of Manga Studio's capabilities (put off by the slightly confusing interface, amongst other things) but you've convinced me to grapple with it in more depth!

10th December, 2009, [10:06 am](#)

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2.  *Ste Pickford* says

Really interesting stuff. Thanks for taking the time to write down your thoughts on this.

10th December, 2009, [10:46 am](#)

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3.  *Terry Ricketts* says

Add Panel Borders – Why not use the pen tool for borders in PS, draw a box (black fill) then another one over it making sure both paths are in the same layer – select them both and hit the exclude overlapping shape areas icon, this'll give you a nice boarder which you can change anytime with the pen tool...you can also make any shape you like.

10th December, 2009, [4:33 pm](#)

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4.  *PJ* says

Hi Terry, I think I've wrapped my head around what you're suggesting. Suspect it's probably more useful than mine if it wasn't for the fact that I'm always drawing my panel borders over pre-drawn pencil layouts, meaning I never really need to correct anything...

-pj

10th December, 2009, [4:54 pm](#)

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5. [Terry Ricketts](#) says

ah ok, i see, lol – i always have to change stuff i do so try and go vector where i can. I did have a go at manga studio but found it was a nightmare to add colour.

...another quick way to create frames is to create a layer and simply draw boxes (any colour) then set a layer style stroke to the thickness you want...then adjust the fill for that layer to 0%

11th December, 2009, [11:08 am](#)

[Edit](#)



6. [PJ](#) says

MS 4 EX is COMPLETELY different for colour than MS3 – in some respects, I loved the idea of MS3 but MS4 was the first version I felt I could use...

-pj

11th December, 2009, [11:15 am](#)

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## Continuing the Discussion

1. [Photoshop vs MangaStudio Part 2 – PJ Holden::Blog](#) linked to this post on 11th December, 2009

[...] vs MangaStudio Part 2 Part 1 (yesterday) covered everything up to the printing of a pencilled page – or at least my particular [...]

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## About PJ Holden::Blog

PJ Holden (or Paul Jason Holden) is a comic artist. Is a Belfast based comic artist.

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