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# Photoshop vs MangaStudio Part 2

[Part 1 \(yesterday\)](#) covered everything up to the printing of a pencilled page – or at least my particular workflow. I should point out, this is just how I do it, there's as many ways to do this stuff as there are comic artists so there's no real right way or wrong way, just my way...

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Anyhue, part 2, we'll cover (and this may get very technical and very dull ! just be warned) :

- Scan in (the newly inked pages)
- 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

## Scan



Photoshop

As before, scanning is fairly straightforward – select the import, scan and the scanner you're using, then I normally import as full colour (remember the pencils are blue and we want to remove the pencils as cleanly as possible – which I've found easier to do in photoshop than rely on how the scanner does it). Once scanned as full colour, I can then select the blue channel (this will, counter-intuitively, reveal everything that isn't blue) increase the contrast and, while still the in the channel convert to bitmap – this produces a neat b&w image that's pretty clean.

I open up a template (see yesterdays post), placing the newly scanned image into position. Then it's a matter of clean up...



MangaStudio

I open the story that contains the pencilled pages, scan the image in (this time scan in in b&w rather than full colour – a word on that in a sec) and place the image into position.



## A word on Blueline

Non-repro blue or blueline is a technique that relies on an ancient technology for printing. In the good old days, when original artwork was sent off to be photographed the non-repro blue would simply disappear from the process (presumably because of the light used to brighten the page for reproduction). These days though, scanner technology, while it still uses a bright light to lighten the page before scanning it doesn't seem to make the blue drop out as much (or at all) – so dropping blue is often done after the scanning is done. I've found though (and different scanners may give different results) that the blue line that I'm using in photoshop (which is actually a slightly cyan-like blue) seems to be picked up more than the pale blue that I've been using in MangaStudio (hence the difference in process between the two). I imagine some more fiddling with settings in photoshop will get me the exact same shade of blue – though with MS selecting the colour for lineart really is very, very simple (making it easier to experiment with the perfect colour for your scanner).



Well, much of a muchness – bit of an unfair comparison as the process diverge slightly, it's the clean up is where it gets interesting ...

## Cleaning Up and Touching Up the artwork



Photoshop

Cleaning up in photoshop is a matter of selecting the Brush tool (press B) and setting your colours to

black for foreground and white for background. Once done you can then simply go around the page ‘fixing’ things. Adding white, redrawing bits here there and everywhere. So far so normal. A common problem (at least for me) is when you come across a hand or face that’s been drawn too large or small – the drawing is perfectly fine, it just needs shrunk (or enlarged). Here’s where the slowdowns start. Shrinking or enlarging a selected area (or using the ‘Magic Wand’ to select only a white area) all require that the image is actually greyscale rather than b&w. So the first step is to convert the image to greyscale. Once photoshop has stopped thinking about it you’re then free to start manipulating. Selecting area, pressing [CTRL-T] to transform (you can do this either using the selection or cut the area you want to manipulate out and paste it in as a new layer – sometimes very useful). Sadly, that’s not the end, once done you’ll now have some lovely sharp b&w art with some bits that include fuzzy greys (if, for example, you’ve enlarged a head). So the next step is to convert back to b&w – photoshop thinks and you’re done. (Unless you’ve missed another bit and you have to repeat the entire process). All in all, it’s a time consuming and dull process.



## MangaStudio

Cleaning up in MS is a similar thing, selecting the Pen Tool (press P) and using it. MS has a slightly odder option, in that black, white and transparent are all colour options. Using transparent is equivalent to using an Alpha layer in photoshop – though it’s a lot simpler, and not nearly as flexible. But, for most comic artists, simpler is better (certainly for me). Using the cintiq/wacom, the pen draws in black and the eraser uses transparent (in PS the pen draws the foreground colour, the eraser uses the background colour – you can swap foreground and background using the [X] key).

And ... the next bit ... is kinda where MS leaves PS lying kicking and screaming in the dust. In MS the Magic Wand tool works in b&w – unlike PS, there’s no need to convert to greyscale first. This keeps the filesize low and the processing speeds high. Once selected, again, unlike PS – without conversion to greyscale, you can scale, or rotate or whatever. It very cleverly converts the selected area to greyscale BEFORE you transform it and converts it back to b&w once transformed (as a former computer programmer, I can appreciate how simple and eloquent that solution is – I admit it, even for a comic guy I’m a real nerd).



Clear win for MS. In fact, this alone would be enough reason to move over to MS, no more ‘Photoshop is attempting to fill the gap’ (a weird message that will appear sometimes when you’re simply moving a block from one area to another). No more little watch as PS takes time to think about what you’re trying to do. This, literally saves minutes (and minutes makes hours and hours makes pages and pages makes MONEY)

One of the reasons MS is so much quicker when it comes to this, is the expedient of not having to convert to greyscale (once if you’re lucky, multiple times if you’re feeling a little underpressure and you keep missing things) but also, once a file is a greyscale the memory required for the image goes from 3Mb for a b&w 400dpi US art sized image to 25Mb for the same in greyscale (a conversion, which took, roughly, 10seconds)

And yes, we’re talking seconds per process here, but they all add up and, worse than that, they turn a process that should be – at best fun to, at worst, unbearable.

## Flatten and Convert to B&W



## Photoshop

Simple, really, convert to b&w (if you haven't already done so) it'll automatically flatten any layers you have and then save.



## MangaStudio

As the art I've just imported is now part of a multipage story, I will then export the individual page into a photoshop format – simple enough – just export and that's it.

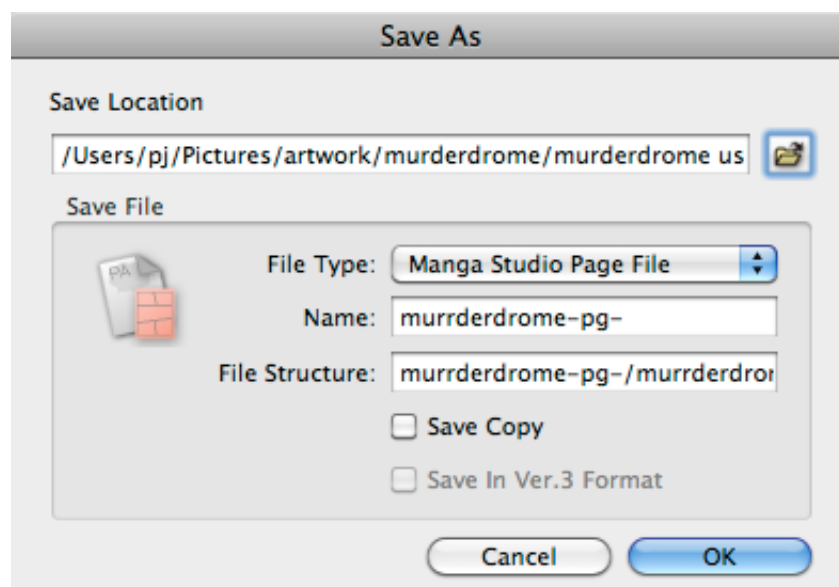


vs



Well, not really much in them. To be fair to PS, I know it well enough to understand its quirks and, therefore, I trust it. MS I'm still feeling my way round and will backup and save multiple times to make sure work doesn't get lost. As I find my way I'm sure trust will come...

## Summary



I've skillfully avoided talking about MS's save dialogue. MS uses two document types, Pages and Stories – stories can contain multiple pages. When you create a new document you can create a story or a page. I used to create pages for every document – as I would in PS, but the save dialogue (pictured) was so off-putting I actually found it easier to create a story with multiple pages, that way a 22 page story has only one save dialogue to deal with for the story. Exporting is equal terrifying (at least the first time you do it) being a multi-headed hydra of a dialogue box (fill in one option and two will replace it). Again, I think, this speaks to MS being more windows like than mac like. Having said that, once you've figured it out, it's probably not something that'll ever worry you again.

In the plus column, though, are many features that don't have any sort of equivalent in photoshop – especially if you go for MS EX (which is the big brother of the DEBUT version). The perspective ruler makes drawing in perspective a simple snap to grid style option.

So, to sum up, for a comic artist, should you abandon PS (and by PS I mean GIMP or any other non-

specific application for handling images) and move to MS? Damn right, you should. But just make sure you set aside a lot of time to get to grips with it. I mean, I've owned two versions of MS for over a year, and have only now got round to using it...

## BUY IT!

(These are Amazon Affiliate Links, which I'll get a tiny, tiny kickback from – how tiny? MINISCULE...)

[Manga Studio Debut 4.0 \(Mac/PC CD\)](#) (this is around £39)

Or

[Manga Studio EX 4 \(Mac/PC CD\)](#) (this is around £250)

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By [PJ](#) – 11th December, 2009

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## 2 Responses

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1.  [Edward kaye](#) says

Nice write-up PJ!

I tried the 30 day trial out, and found it pretty fun for doodling in, as compared to photoshop.

I'd like to pick up a copy when I have some more money.

11th December, 2009, [10:26 am](#)

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## Continuing the Discussion

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

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

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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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