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## Big bang theory cute comic book artist

So many of today's popular films began humbly on the printed page - not in novels, but in comicbooks. There is a clear appeal to the illustrated format's ability to tell both large, complex stories without compromising narrative intimacy. And capture these moments requires a qualified illustrator. What is it like to face a blank page every day? To learn more about the average comic book illustrator career, we talked to Matt Haley. Matt has been professionally illustrating comics with DC, Marvel and more for more, and told us how he packed his life into a truck to have a chance to get a comic. Tell us a little about yourself and your experience. My name is Matt Haley. Since 1991, I have been a full-time professional comic book illustrator. Right now I'm illustrating Wonder Woman '77 for DC Comics Digital. I'm probably known in comic circles for my work on Superman Returns, Tangent: The Joker, Elseworld's Finest: Supergirl and Batgirl, as well as many others for DC, Ghost for Dark Horse and The Order for Marvel. Over the past few years I've also been providing direction for art and illustrations on numerous media projects with comic book icon Stan Lee, like Who Wants To Be A Superhero and Comic-Con Episode IV: Fan's Hope with Morgan Spurlock. I'm also the director of the viral online hit Blackstar Warrior.What prompted you to choose a career path? There was never a question I grew up on the Batman comics Neal Adams and Steve Ditko's Shade The Changing Man, and announced to my people at the age of four that I was going to be a comic artist. Yes, I almost trained to do this, staying in my room and drawing all day, every day, often to the detriment of my homework! How did you get a job? What kind of education and experience do you need? In 1990, I was in college in New Mexico and read a copy of the Comic Book Buyers Guide that profiled San Diego Comic-Con that summer. It was mentioned that the editors of all the different comic companies would be out there reviewing the portfolios of aspiring comic artists, so my college classmate Tom Simmons and I decided to do some sample plays to show them. The 1989 Batman movie was still everywhere, so it's reasonable that since everyone and their grandmother were probably submitting samples of batman art, I should choose a title no one would consider doing, so I chose Star Trek: The Next Generation. I was a lousy inker so Tommy took on this role and did a masterful job, and I did real drawings. We made a set of sample works of art and threw the work, put ourselves in his truck and drove to San Diego. We didn't have a shower. We have some good reviews on the show and there's a second set of samples that made me my first star trek pencil concert: Next Generation Annual #2 for DC (reprinted in The Best Of Star Trek: The Next Generation trade). 54 pages — I was delighted and terrified Time. Do you need licenses or certificates? Just a strong portfolio, that's really all they care about — whether you can draw well, and consistently do well. A good editor can detect professional work, even if the actual art style is unusual and consistency is key. What things do you do beyond what average people see? What do you really spend most of your time with? Avoiding distraction. Drawing (and more recently writing for me) is an extremely time-consuming job and I have to cut off the world to focus. I recently disconnected internet access to a computer to which I will generate my art, and my productivity has doubled. Most of my time I spend sitting and drawing and swinging my head to very loud music on headphones. There are a few emails back and forth with my editor and various other clients, but mostly just drawing until it's time for yoga classes! What misunderstandings do people often have about your work? Oh, there's a lot of Wow, you work from home, it has to be so cool and you work with Stan Lee, you have to be famous. I've been an independent artist throughout my career, so I really have no idea what ordinary office work looks like. I was the one who saw Office Space and didn't get jokes. That said, I'm probably very spoiled and won't last five minutes in a more traditional profession. People seem to think that comic artists are rich; it can't be further from the truth! Hand-to-mouth, usually, but don't trade it for nothing. Artists are very lucky and have a lot of freedom, and it's nice not to have to wake up to the alarm every morning! My commute is about fifteen meters, and I can work in my robe. What are the average working hours? I used to work until I fell, every day, but as I got older I worked hard to work less hard if it made any sense. I work about twelve hours a day, but that's not all drawing. Some of them write about different projects that I have cooking. It is important to work on your own creations or you can become terribly artistically boring. I work six days a week and try to take one day off. Daily yoga really helps to keep me sane and saves my back. What personal tips and shortcuts made your work easier? It will nowadays art seems to flow quite smoothly. Do you have any advice for people who need to use the services? Yes, they can visit my website and send me a message via the contact form! I've been doing this for so long that I can usually find out what a potential customer is looking for during a preliminary consultation. You'll be surprised how many people would like to outsource to an artist, but you think it's complicated or the artist will be volatlie or difficult to solve, and the truth is that we're ordinary people who can draw well. I would add that most people have no idea what goes into making art and may not understand that this is how we make a living. Too many times people will get in touch and ask the artist to draw something for free, with lines like You Love To Draw, you should do it for exposure or you can bang it out on the weekend, can't you?, to which I'll usually ask them if they ask their lawyer or plumber to work for free as well. People have good intentions, I think they just might not know how to respect an individual because it's a fairly specialized field. What money can you expect in your work? There is no standard. I have rates that I quote based on my experience and my past customer list, but there is no starting salary per se; that's whatever the market is going to bear, you know? A comic artist working for the Big Two (Marvel and DC) can expect \$100-\$200 or more for a party pencil, and about \$75-150 for inks, smaller publishers tend to pay about half of that or so. These are just general numbers. If you knock out a page or two a day, you can probably make \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year, just generating art. Real money is about creating intellectual property that can make money for you, but it's a bit like playing a lottery, in a sense. Many artists have spouses who can support their efforts, and it's probably quite difficult to keep your family solely on your own art, depending on where you are in your career. I don't have children, so it's a little easier for me to keep doing art for life. How to move up in your field? That's a big question, isn't it? No one knows. Especially in comicbooks, one is the whim of the editor employing you, the sales marketing department, buying public (hopefully) likes what you do and buying more. Many name artists today in business at the same time I did and took advantage of the market of comic book speculators before it crashed, and therefore there are known quantities from those days. Nowadays there is a lot about the writer in comics; The artist can be seen as interchangeable for some marketing people perhaps, I don't know. Me, I just did it and diversified into art for television, creating comic art for businesses (a big part of my business nowadays), game storyboards, poster illustration, etc. The great thing about starting art training as a comic artist is that it's the perfect training ground for almost any other artistic discipline. Moving up can be largely about luck. I think it's more about not giving up. What are your customers below/over value? Clients tend to overestimate their own artistic and creative knowledge and underestimate the artist's knowledge. They don't mean it, but art isn't really valued in our culture, like playing competitive sports or flying a plane. Everyone thinks they can draw and write well, so there have been times when a potential customer tries to micromanage the process, and there are ways to deal with it, so the customer gets what they need and I don't get migraines! What advice would you give to those who aspire to join your profession? Don't give up, but realize that you can dedicate yourself to life to do so. Not for everyone. I would tell potential comic artists to start their own comic book online and develop audiences from there. Too many artists think they can come in and start drawing Spider-Man, but there are only so many comics that require drawing. This is a ridiculously competitive area and it is not always a meritocracy. Submit your work to smaller publishers, knock 'em dead out there and see if bigger companies pay attention to you. Comics owned by creators are big these days, and people can make a decent living by doing their own thing. Something I can finally do in the near future, we'll see. But really, don't give up, no matter how rough it gets. For the right person being a professional artist can be extremely rewarding! This interview has been edited for clarity. Career Spotlight is a new series of lifehacker interviews that focuses on ordinary people and work you may not hear much about — from doctors to plumbers, aviation engineers, and everything in between. If you would like to share your career, please email us at + career@lifehacker.com.Title image adapted from KennyK, 2 (Shutterstock).

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