

the

challenge

Welcome to the Challenge section of 2DArtist. Since December 2006 we have run a monthly challenge over on ConceptArt.org and in 2DArtist, giving the digital painting community the chance to enter for prizes from the 3DTotal web shop, and for the opportunity to have their work featured in this very magazine.

After 31 successful challenges, we are now taking a break – much to the disappointment of all our regular challengers, I know, but we hope to bring the challenge feature back again in the near future, so we'll look forward to seeing you all there! In the meantime, please enjoy the last-for-a-while Stylised Challenge article, where you can see the winners of the final [Amazon Woman Warrior](#) challenge, alongside some great making of articles from not only this challenge, but last month's [Robots](#) one, too!



Amazon

Stylised Character challenge

The Stylised Animal Challenge – Amazon

Welcome to the final monthly challenge in 2DArtist magazine (for a while, at least). For the past 31 months we have selected a topic, plucked from the strange imaginations of the 2DArtist team – and more often than not our challengers, too – and then posted images over on ConceptArt.org for all to see and use as inspiration. We have then relied on the minds and talents of the ConceptArt.org forum members to come up with the weird and wonderful stylised concepts that you will have seen over the past three years within our challenge articles.

We are sad to announce that the Amazon Warrior Woman is the final stylised challenge that we'll be running, but we certainly hope to come back with something new for everyone to get involved in as soon as we can, so for now we bring you the final stylised challenge article. [Sob] To take us out in style we're not only showing the top ten winners from the Amazon challenge with the top three making of articles from last month's Robots challenge, but we're

8th



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also bringing you making ofs from our Amazon winners, too. So dry those eyes and indulge in a bit of community love as we wave farewell to our dear friend: the Stylised Challenge.

If you have any words of support, regret, annoyance, or any other thoughts about the ending of the Stylised Challenge, you are more than welcome to join our current and previous

9th



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challengers and share your thoughts over on this forum thread. Thank you for your support!

What have we been looking for?

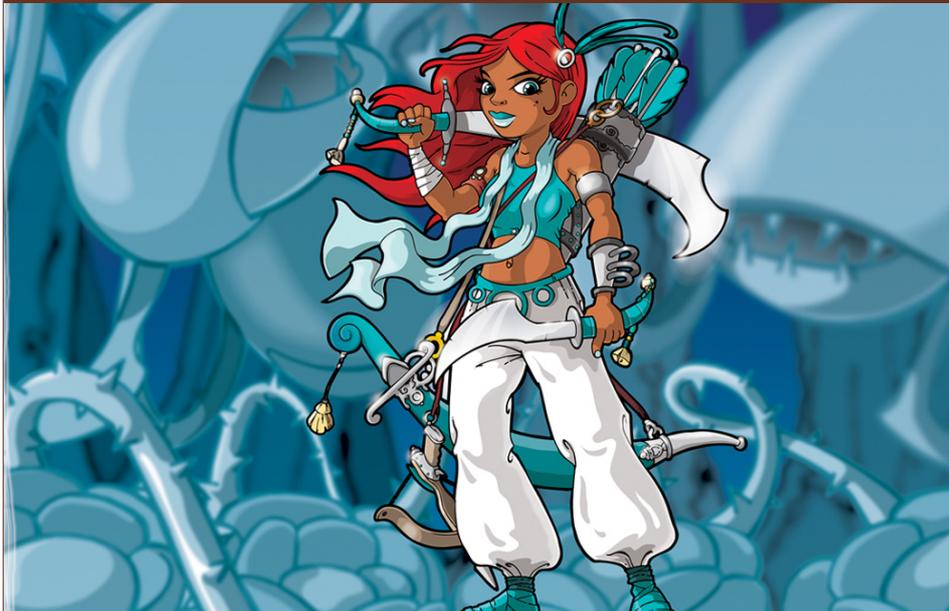
Funny and humorous entries which break the subject down to its most recognisable components. We ask our challengers to emphasise these characteristics in whichever

7th



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6th



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ways they think best, and to render their stylised/abstract/cartoon masterpieces to share with the world through the electronic pages of ConceptArt.org and 2DArtist magazine. Winners of our challenges have then been asked to show the stages of creation of their winning concepts – different elements and some brief explanation

text – of why, and how, they did what they did. This then gets formatted into the rather fetching pages you'll find here within this article.

We hope you will enjoy the results of the final challenge - one which we quite honestly think has knocked the socks (and bras, in some

cases) off some of our other challenges. We give thanks to everyone who have supported the challenges over the last three years, and to those who have helped this final challenge go out on a high. Thank you, and enjoy!

5th



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Making Of

Here are the 'Making Of' from last month's top 3 winning entries...

3rd Artina

Software Used: Photoshop

Step 01

After some quick sketches that weren't really turning me on, I decided to go with an image paying homage to the Sistine Chapel painting by Michelangelo. I used a custom brush that I created myself which I love to sketch with – it has the feeling of a palette knife that gives me some nice thick and thin lines, and happy accidents tend to occur from it that I can take on and work with further (Fig.01). Try this for yourself: Take a round brush, lower the Roundness to 10%, Angle to 90, set the Spacing to 1%, Size Jitter to Pen Pressure, Angle Jitter to Pen Tilt, and set Flow and Opacity Jitter

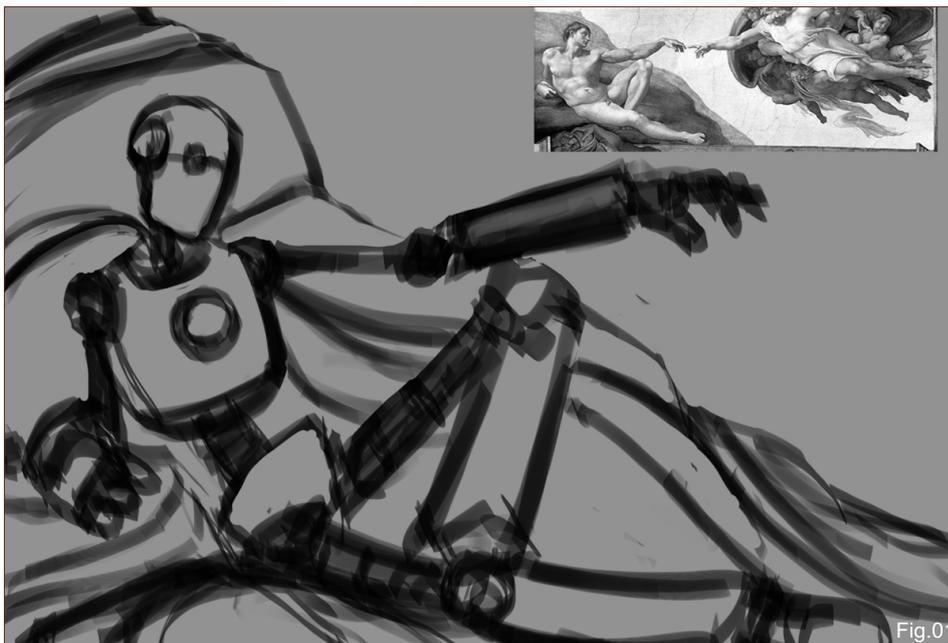


Fig.01



Fig.02



Fig.03

to Pen Pressure. Have some fun with your brushes!

Step 02

I created a new layer on top of my sketch and set it to Color blending mode. I wanted to use contrasting colors to make the character "pop" from the background. These were basic colors that complemented each other nicely. I created another new layer on top, set to Normal this time, to define the character a bit more using the same color palette (Fig.02).

Step 03

I defined the character and drapery a bit more in this next step. I was still experimenting with the design of the robot; I wanted it to be a simple design that was easily recognizable as a humanoid robot. The pose was very important because it had to hearken to the Sistine Chapel painting, soothe robot's wires and buttons

were kept to a minimum in order to avoid any confusion (Fig.03).

Step 04

I flipped the canvas horizontally at this stage to see if the piece worked any better the other way. I added the yellow to keep the colors basic and high in contrast. I also made some changes to the drapery because I wasn't getting the feeling I was hoping for. I also added some details to the limbs and gave the green metal a textured feel by painting in different angles and smudging (Fig.04).

Step 05

I kept defining the lights and darks, adding more detail and bounced lighting on the character. I added a rusty texture which I found online to give the bluish-green parts some more character, as well as giving a reactor detail to the eyes and chest plate (Fig.05).



Fig.04



Fig.05

Step 06

I used the Burn and Dodge tools to punch up the contrast between the lights and darks here, as well as a Levels Adjustment Layer to achieve the same goal. And it was at this stage that I painted in the hand of the scientist meeting that of the robot. Referencing Michelangelo's piece I added some pink bounce lights onto the palm of the man's hand to make it sit a little better in the scene (Fig.06).

Step 07

In the final step I added a new Gradient Layer (magenta to green), set it to Overlay and lowered the Opacity to about 20% or less. I copied the layer, and to enhance the lighting effects I focused an omni light behind the two hands to draw attention to them. I continued refining the details until I was happy, then I

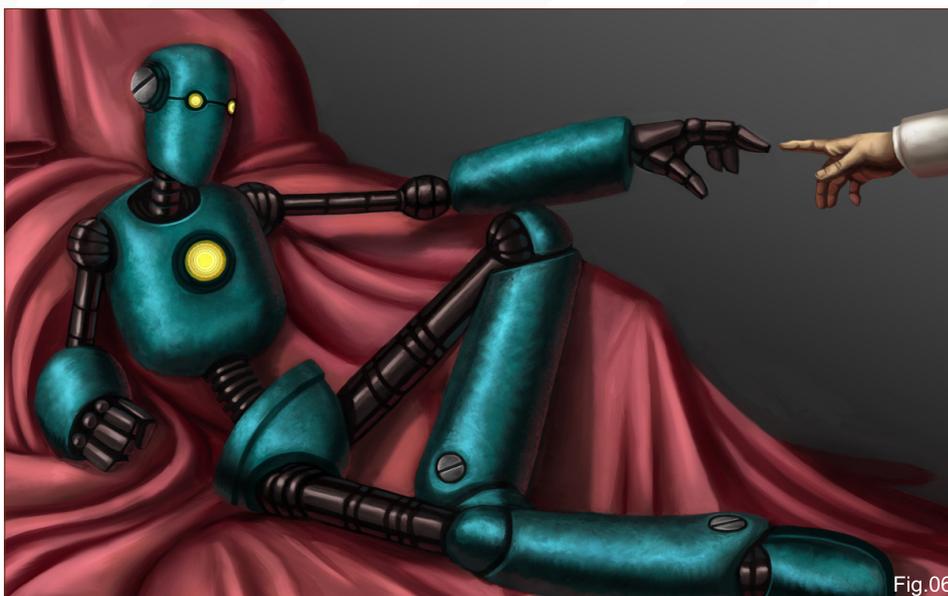
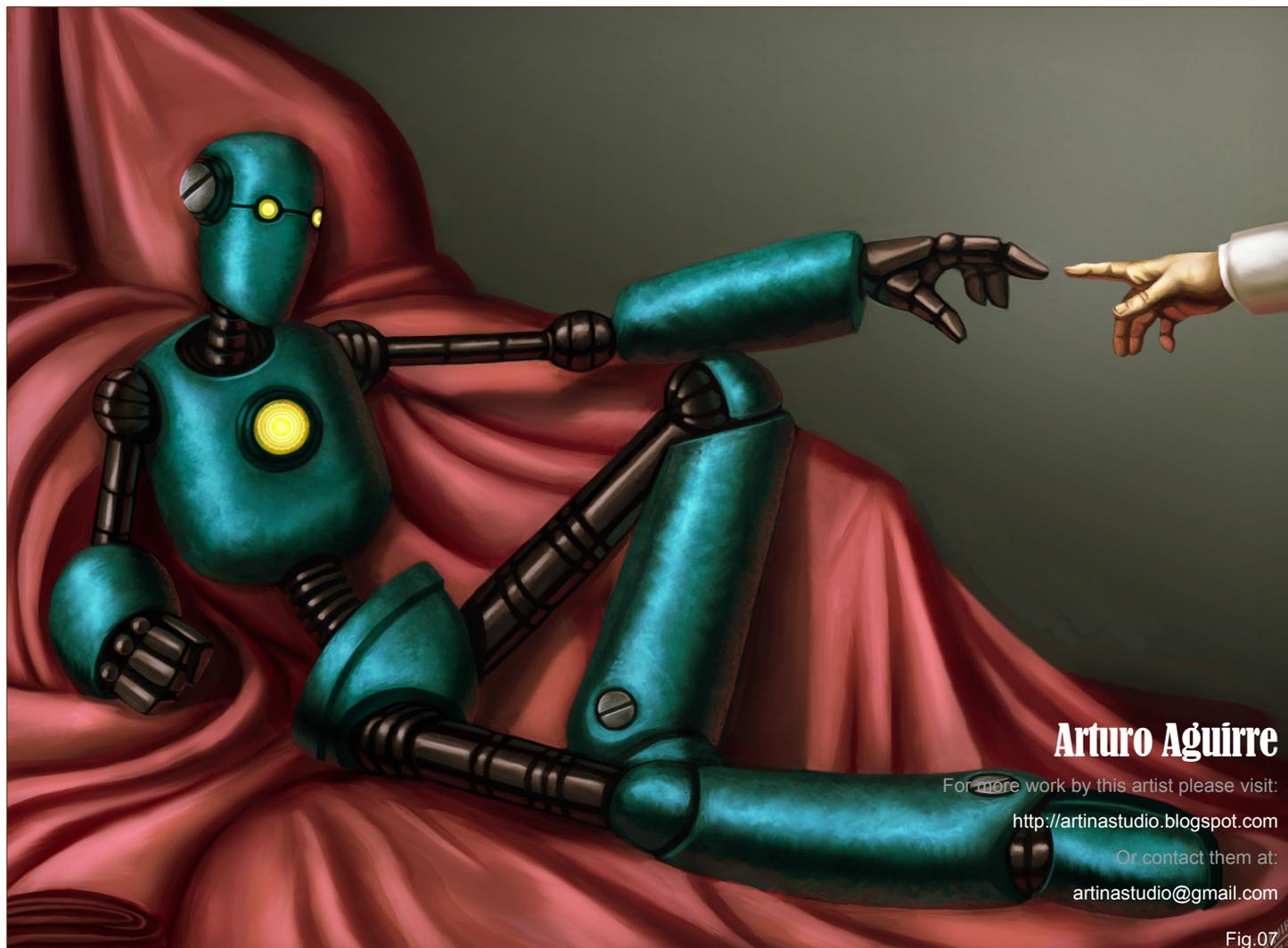


Fig.06

flattened the image, copied the resulting layer and added the High Pass filter to it (Filter > Other > High Pass). I then set the new layer to Soft Light and lowered its opacity, adding

a Levels Adjustment Layer and Layer Mask, erasing those parts that I wanted to act as the lights with a soft brush. And that was it – done (Fig.07)!



Arturo Aguirre

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Fig.07



2nd The Antarctic

Software Used: Illustrator, Photoshop

Hello to all who read 2DArtist magazine! This is my first time featuring in the magazine with a 'making of' to explain my process when creating images for the Super Stylized Challenges. I'd just like to say thanks to everyone all who voted for me, I really appreciate it!

I wasn't going to enter the Robot challenge originally, as I was away in Australia at the time and I didn't have any of my usual kit to work with. So my initial sketches were pretty much a loose affair that I thought I would do nothing more with. But when my girlfriend, Michelle saw the image of Tiq Taq – 1901, she suggested that I give it my full attention (**Fig.01**).

The idea behind Tiq Taq is that he's a steam-driven robot from the Victorian era, who, in order to survive, has constantly had to upgrade himself to accommodate the various trends that the eras he's lived through have demanded. The narrative is perhaps clearer to me, but I often like to establish a story like this to give me a

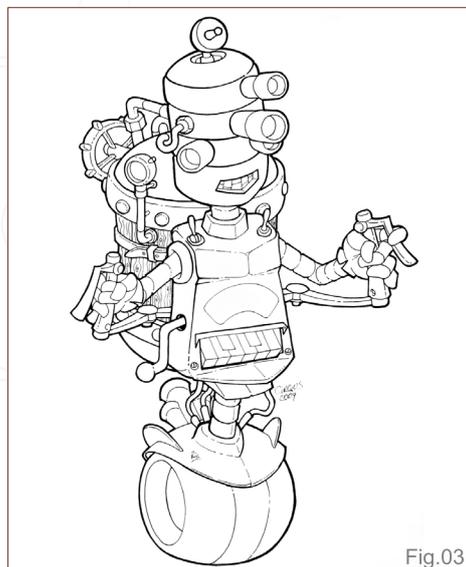


Fig.03

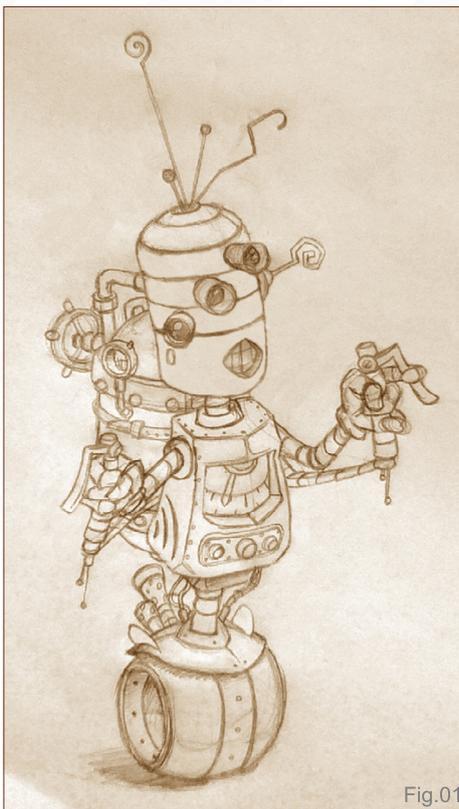


Fig.01

certain focus when I'm drawing. It also allowed me an excuse to indulge in two of my main obsessions: steampunk and *Tron* (remember that film?). Well, I tried to utilize both in the design of Tiq Taq. I gave him the requisite steampunk accessory of a boiler, as well as those highly stylized wheels seen on the Light Cycles in *Tron*.

So with the initial sketch done I began to refine the concept, and on this occasion I re-drew the whole thing on an A3 pad and used the larger format to clear up some visuals on the concept. I added a piano keypad to his belly, a few switches, dials, and the radar on his head. Once happy with the basic look, I took a sheet of tracing paper and drew over the pencil lines with black ink (**Fig.02**). I did this in order to have as clean an image as possible before scanning it.

Because I was without a scanner on this occasion, I took a digital photograph of the line drawing instead, exposing it to as much even lighting as possible. I used my girlfriend's Canon Ixus camera for this, and thankfully it came out reasonably even. I did of course still



Fig.02

have to tweak it in Photoshop to really clean up the grays: desaturating the image, playing with the brightness and contrast, feathering the edges and filling areas with white, to give me a very definitive black and white digitized image (**Fig.03**).

Now, at this stage I would usually vectorize the image using a redundant piece of software from Adobe called Streamline, which I still have on my antiquated Apple Mac G3. However, as I was in Australia and had no G3 or Streamline to hand, I had to use Illustrator CS3 on my girlfriend's PC instead. I'd never used CS3 before as I still run Illustrator CS on my Mini-Mac (which was in Australia with me). So I had to experiment a little with the Trace feature in Illustrator CS3 before finding a happy compromise between line thickness and accuracy.

Once I settled on a version and saved it as an Illustrator legend file, I transferred it file to my Mini-Mac where I could finally begin working on the image with the comfort and familiarity that I'm used to in Illustrator CS. Phew!

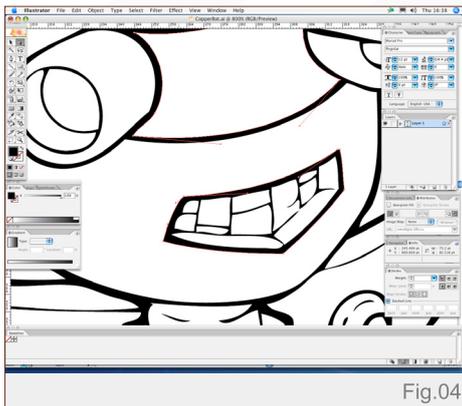


Fig.04

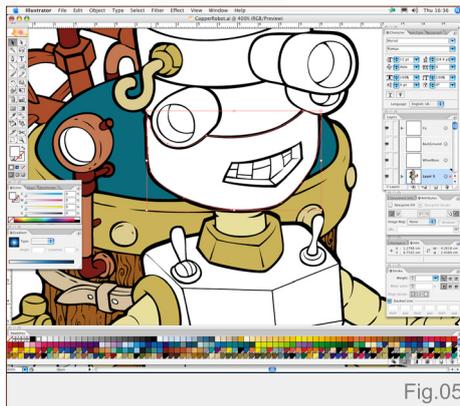


Fig.05

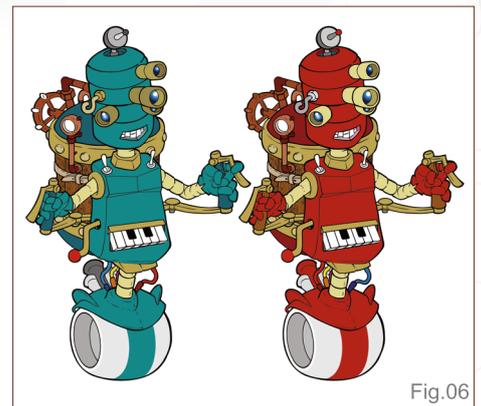


Fig.06

Within Illustrator CS I began by working on tidying up the line work. Now this can be *really* painstaking, and for this particular project – it was! The first step for me, with Illustrator, is to agonize over the image with the Bevel tools (**Fig.04**), refining the lines that the vectorized image translated from the inked scan. Sometimes this works well and a minimal amount of correction is needed, but at other times, like with this piece, there is a great deal of refinement necessary.

Once done refining I continued with the fun part: adding color to the selected areas (**Fig.05**). At this point I wasn't adding details like highlights or shadows, but merely adding color to see what worked. I often duplicated the image, trying alternative color arrangements (**Fig.06**) before settling on a final look.

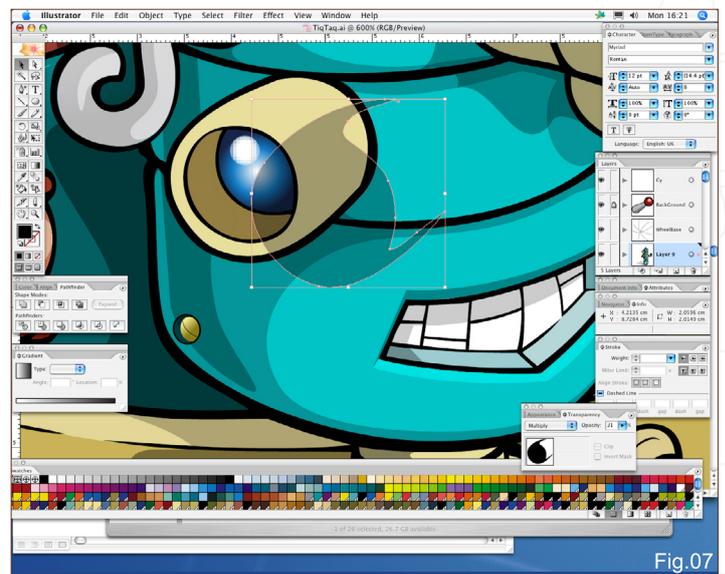


Fig.07

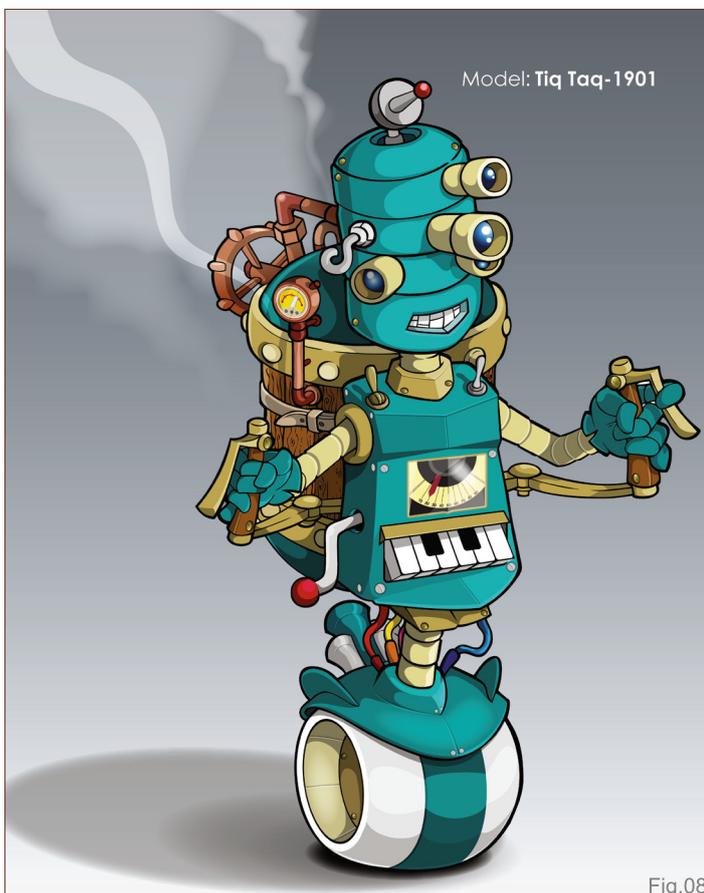


Fig.08

When I was happy with the color I began the process of adding details, in particular shadows and highlights. Sometimes I merely added more black to an established color area, or I would often, with the Pencil tool, draw on top of an area to add shading/highlights – using the Transparency feature I could then Multiply or Overlay that area accordingly, with a chosen percentage for the desired effect (**Fig.07**).

With Tiq Taq, once I was happy with the details, I decided on a subtle background so as not to clash with the very busy colors of the robot. I quickly added some steam effects using the Pencil tool, drawing white cloud shapes and feathering the edges, reducing the opacity for that vaporous look (**Fig.08**).

And that's how Tiq Taq – 1901 originated, rendered almost exclusively in Illustrator. It was fun!

Richard G.D. Baker

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1st 28th Wing

Software Used: ArtRage 2 and CorelDraw

Inspiration

The robot is one of my favorites themes because there are many interesting details to them, for example pipes, cogs, LEDs and the like, and their textures cover a whole range from shiny to rusty – they can be really varied and visually exciting! For this particular robot themed challenge, my inspiration came from street musicians – buskers. I wanted to create two characters: a small and rounded DJ 'bot, and a lanky guitar playing 'bot. I wanted to place them in a city environment, or at least that was the plan anyway!

Sketch

First, I made a quick pencil sketch to define the forms (Fig.01), discovering the postures and working out the relationship between the two robots. I refined the sketch to provide a clear drawing, trying to use simple forms to build up the robots' bodies (Fig.02).

Values

For this challenge, as you might already know by now is my habit, I used ArtRage 2. So I

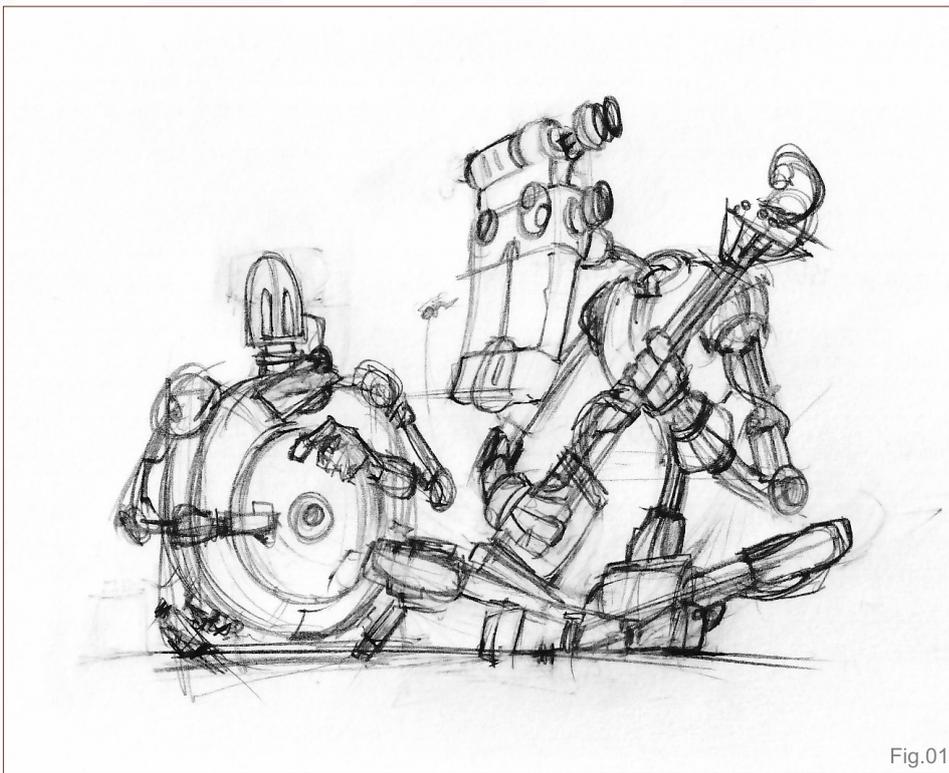


Fig.01

scanned the line drawing to a pencil layer, changed the layer mode to Multiply, and started to block the light values in with large brushstrokes on a new layer. First, I defined a light gray background, and on another layer I started to work on the robots, adding light and dark tones with quick paint strokes (Fig.03a).

I wanted an industrial background, a metal bridge or something, with the robots looking sharp on a blurry background (Fig.03b). After applying some quick values I started adding detail, refining forms and cleaning edges. At this point, I found that I couldn't finish the picture to

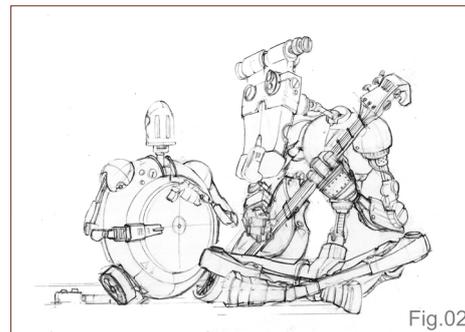


Fig.02

the given deadline. So I had two alternatives: one was to have it remain an unfinished project and try to complete it in the near future; the other was to focus the work on just one of the robots...



Fig.03a

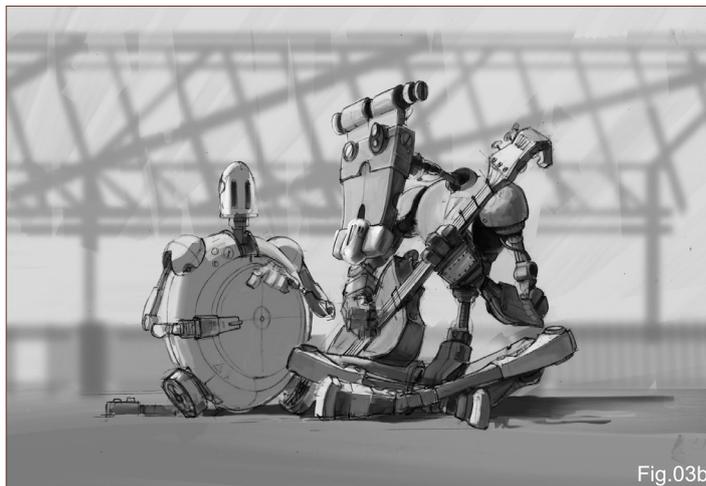


Fig.03b

I chose the latter option and changed the concept, keeping the background design but giving it a darker tone and continuing to work on the guitar robot's details (**Fig.04a-b**).

I used basic paper textures with the Chalk Tool to give rusty effects, and the Pencil Tool to find edges and give fine details (**Fig.05a**). The background was too homogeneous, so I Googled a free texture, used it as a stencil (mask), and painted it over with a darker tone (**Fig.05b**).

Colors

The coloring part was very quick. I picked a tawny color and made a new layer, switched it to Overlay mode and filled it with large brushstrokes. On another new layer, once again in Overlay mode (above the first color layer), I started working with a reddish-brown color to block in the 'bot. I mixed some lighter blue into the background and gave some blue tints to the robot to reflect the sky and break the monochrome feeling of the picture a little. The finishing touch was the addition of a speech balloon, which I made in CorelDraw using musical notes from a free font set (**Fig.06 – Final**).

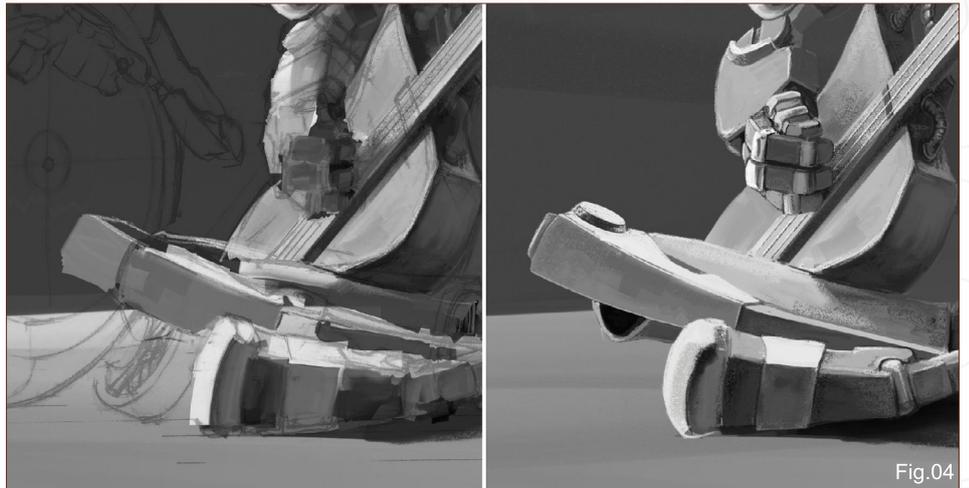


Fig.04



Fig.05a



Fig.05b

Final Thoughts

Much to my regret, I was unable realize my original concept in the end, but I hope I will have the time to finish it one day, and that it won't end up in the waste bin of my many unfinished projects!

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KW 2005
05
31.



Making Of

Here are the 'Making Of' from this month's top 3 winning entries...

3rd Marcuswelbey

Software Used: Flash, Photoshop

For this making of article I will try to explain how I developed a character concept using vectors in Flash, as well as some Photoshop effects.

Concept and Sketch

One of the things I kept in mind right from the beginning was the time I had for the project, so that I could be sure to stick to it. For this Amazon challenge I didn't have much time once I'd started, so I decided to begin the work in Flash, which allowed me to work with precision in my line work, and later finish off the image with Photoshop for the lighting, shadow and blur effects.

I like drawing girls in all kind of situations, so this contest was a real pleasure for me to participate in because I felt comfortable with the topic. In the initial sketch I tried to find a pose that helped me show the personality of my character, which in this case was a furtive, wild woman. I chose an extremely basic outfit, and gave a punk touch to her hairstyle for a more combat look. With regards to the composition, I tried to focus the attention on the main figure, to make



the character look as much of a protagonist as possible (Fig.01).

Start in Flash

Taking the sketch into Flash, I started by using the line the Pencil tool, the smallest brush, because this step was just intended as a reference to delimit the color zones. Flash allows fast and precise editing of lines.

The painting process is extremely different from Photoshop, since instead of working the drawing globally, I fill the whole drawing with subtle gradients in order to create soft lighting



(Fig.02). Flash CS3 has a good tool to work with gradients – comfortable and intuitive. I hardened the shadows using the Paint Bucket Tool with the Paint Selection mode toggled, which allowed me to work on areas without altering the rest, maintaining the brushstrokes' natural feeling. The big difference when working this way is that you can't build up your picture like in a bitmap painting. In vector art, you need to have a clear objective from the beginning, since it doesn't allow for as much trial and error.

For the background I looked for images to use as reference with a certain mystery behind them. I decided on a picture featuring a waterfall, and this element was fitting with what I was searching for at the time. I didn't want to make anything too definite just yet so I drew some silhouettes of plants and trees in the foreground and gave it a dark tone to avoid too much detailing. Since I intended to heavily blur the cascade in the background later in Photoshop, I didn't spend too much time on it, just simply defined the main shapes (Fig.03).

I finished up work in Flash by detailing some of the character's features, and removed the remaining line work that was left over after coloring (Fig.04).

Finish in Photoshop

I imported all my layers from Flash into Photoshop in PNG format, allowing me to be able to work with them separately and give them different levels of lighting using Hue/Saturation and Brightness/Contrast Adjustment Layers, masking only the desired areas. With the elements separated into layers made the selection process easier, too.

To give some texture to the grass I used a Pattern Overlay layer (Layer > Layer Style > Pattern Overlay) set to Hard Mix with a low opacity. The overlay texture was quite large and I gave it a slight gradient to add a little depth. For the waterfall in the background I made myself a radial Gradient Mask from opaque to

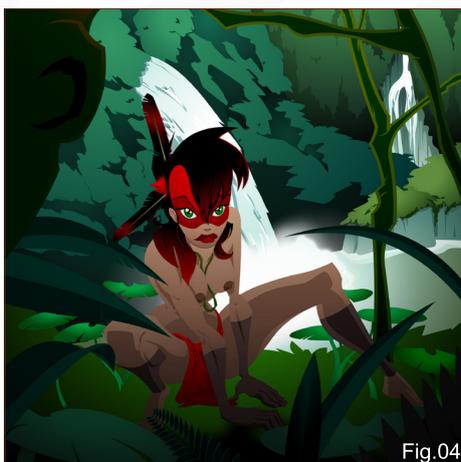


Fig.04

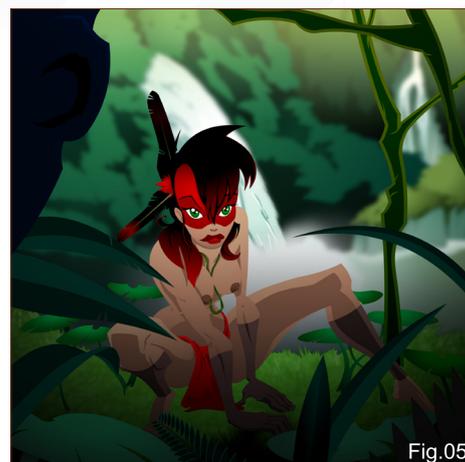


Fig.05

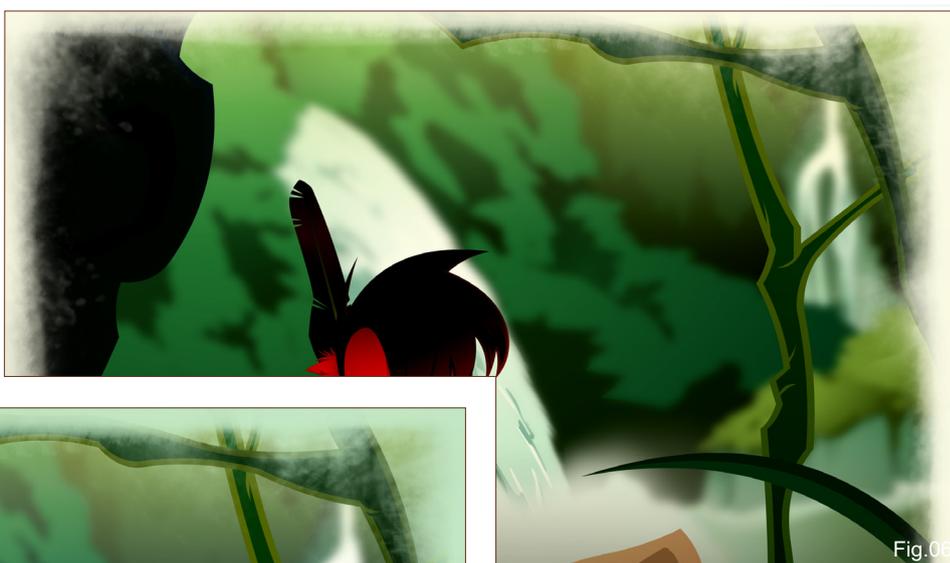


Fig.06



Fig.07

100% alpha, and used a slight Gaussian Blur filter on it. That way I was able to grade the blur intensity from the center to the borders of the gradient (Fig.05).

To create the frame I used the Eraser Tool with different paintbrushes simulating slashes, varying them to avoid showing a pattern in the frame. I tried some tonal changes (Fig.06), and ultimately went for a dark, wet greenish tone (Fig.07).

Thanks and best regards to all!

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2nd jpedro

Software Used: Photoshop

For this stylized Amazon challenge I wanted to try and come up with three different takes, concentrating on proportions and cuteness. I carry a sketchbook with me wherever I go so I can get ideas down when I see something that inspires me, or I'll simply sketch people in a pub – or, as in this case, explore ideas for the stylized challenge!

I usually start a drawing with a rather hard lead pencil (HB) and use softer mechanical pencils in the 2B–4B range for darker values and lines.



Fig.01



Fig.02



Fig.03a



Fig.03b

What I like to do with the harder pencils is to apply only very light pressure and very loosely look for poses that I like. In **Fig.01** and **Fig.02** the very light and scribbled lines around the knees and feet are still visible; in Fig.01 part of the hands and arms are also drawn like that – very lightly. All this light line work gave me a good idea of what the general flow of the poses would be.

If I like how a sketch is going, I will take it forwards with darker, more solid line work, for which the softer pencils are then used. This is comparable to sketching digitally and drawing really rough gestures on a layer, then lowering the opacity of that layer and drawing a cleaner line drawing on a new layer on top of that. It's possible to cover a lot of ground with only a 2B pencil, but I find that using a harder lead and applying only very gentle pressure naturally prevents me from going too dark with my line work too early on.

I generally make sure that I draw not just with my fingers and my wrist resting on the paper

as an anchor point, but I also use my elbow as an anchor, and even draw from the shoulder as well to get some nice flowing lines. I don't spend too much time rendering the sketches – a few lay-ins and areas that are in shadow blocked in are enough, since I color my chosen sketches later in Photoshop.

With the drawings scanned, I left Fig.01 and Fig.02 pretty much untouched and played a little with the third one first of all. I used a very simple round brush in Photoshop for most of the sketching, with Other Dynamics set to Pen Pressure. While I liked the simple sketch (**Fig.03a**), making the silhouette a bit more interesting by introducing the skull helmet with the horns and introducing some basic armor elements gave me another option I liked (**Fig.03b**).

So I had four sketches at this stage, all of which worked with similar design elements but had different emphasis in terms of how they were stylized. Head to body proportions is the most obvious difference; the simplification of, for

example, the facial features and anatomy in general is also quite apparent, especially from Fig.01 to Fig.03a.

Since I really enjoyed the way my Amazon Warrior was holding the sword in Fig.01, giving us that mean look from under her eyebrows, I decided to go ahead and color that one for my challenge entry. I wanted to try a rather loose and painterly approach, so the main brushes I used were the Chalk brushes, and the Pastel on Charcoal Paper, Soft Oil Pastel, and Waxy Crayon brushes from the default Dry Media Brushes set by Photoshop. They all used the same Brush Tip. In Other Dynamics, Opacity Control was set to Pen Pressure; in Shape Dynamics, Control was also set to Pen Pressure, and Minimum Diameter was set to 50%. Angle Jitter Control was set to Initial Direction. I also used a Chalk Brush Tip in the Dual Brush section.

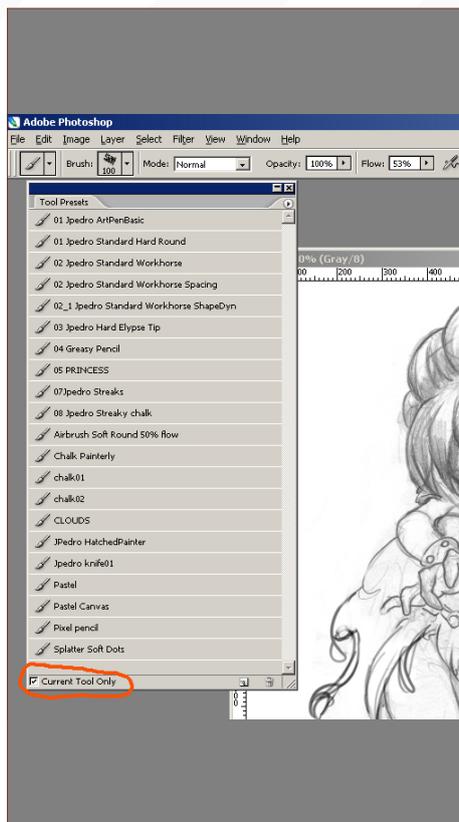


Fig.04



Fig.05



Fig.06

Once a Brush is setup to your liking, you should save that variant of the brush to your brush library. To do that, while in Brush mode, right-click anywhere on the canvas, click the little triangle icon on the top right, and choose New Brush Preset. The Brush you just created should then appear at the bottom of the list. Your list of Brushes can get quite long, and a really great way to access your most commonly used Brushes or other Tools is by saving them as Tool Presets. I've undocked my Tool Presets window and have it open all the time, and I have Current Tool Only ticked (Fig.04). That way, only whatever Tool mode I am currently working in is shown in the list. In this case I am in Brush mode, so all my Brushes I saved as Tool Presets are shown in the list, and I can comfortably select and switch between them. Say, for example, you are in Smudge mode and have found a Brush tip with certain settings that really work well for blending: save it as a Tool Preset – that way you can build up a nice pool of favorite Tools that you can easily access.

I have saved a small selection of my Tool Presets for you to try out if you like (click on the **Free Resources** logo to download with this article). The Chalk Brushes I was talking about can also be found in there. To load them, open your Preset Manager (Edit > Preset Manager > Preset Type: Tools, and open the file).

OK, so for the coloring I went straight for it, laying them in on a Multiply layer on top of my pencil study (Fig.05). Using a combination of Overly, Multiply and Normal layers on top, I gradually built up the detail in color.

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Tool Presets which
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Making Of



I chose to give her red hair and green eyes, which gave me a nice contrast to work with.

I flipped the canvas a few times to get a fresh view on the drawing, and I changed the pose again slightly so that it felt more like she was walking towards us (Fig.06). I emphasized this even more in the final step (Fig.07). The visible brush marks from the Chalk brushes around the character and the broken up edges on her coat and hair were what I intended on achieving, so they didn't need any cleaning up. For my finishing touch I did some detailing work in and around the focal area, and then I called this one done!

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1st bstsk

Software Used: Flash,

We all have one of those pictures where we've thought, "I'm onto something here!" At some point though, things go wrong, and that picture then gets added to a new folder in your "Things to finish someday" section of your hard disk. Well, that was the case with this one: when the theme was given for July's challenge, one of those forgotten images from about four years ago came to mind ... of an Amazon Warrior! The pencil drawing was pretty bad, but it had a certain feeling of motion to it that I liked a lot, so I decided to go for it (**Fig.01**).

I started the picture from scratch. With time having taken my blindfold off, I quickly saw where the pencils had gone wrong before, so I changed the head size and gesture, and tweaked the expression a little. Using my sketch as a background and with a color scheme in mind, I went into Adobe Flash. This might seem like a strange choice for vector based software – Illustrator being much more versatile – but I frequently use Flash for animation and I'm much quicker with it. So I traced the whole image, using a thick colored line for most of the character, which gave it a great cartoon feel. I left some parts without this outline though, where I felt it wasn't needed, like on her hair and her weapon.



Fig.03

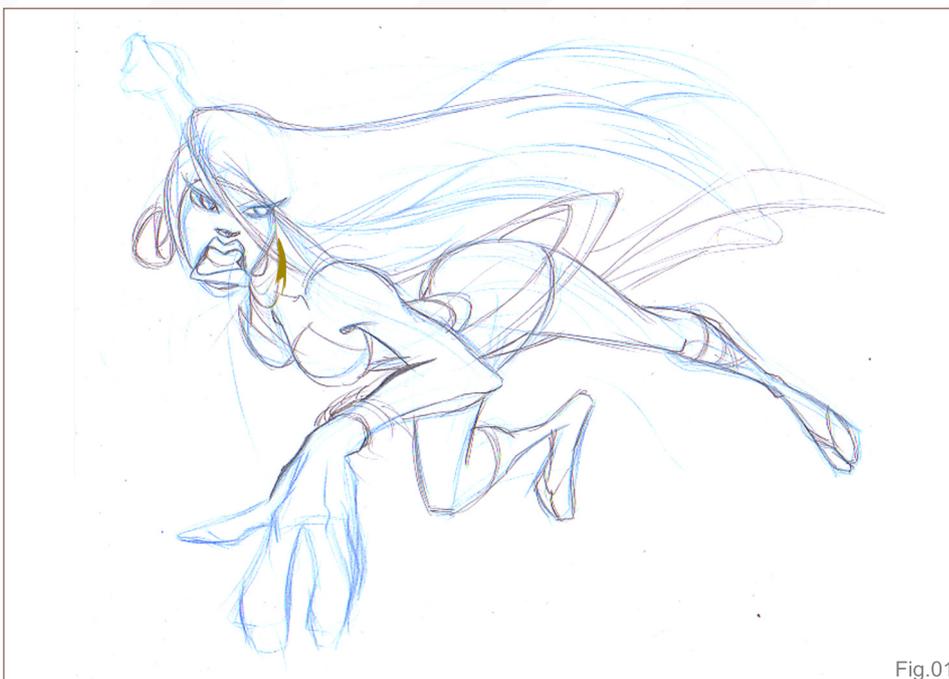


Fig.01



Fig.02

To get a nice ink feel I had to trace both sides of the line; there are software options to do this (not in Flash, though) but I prefer to control the line thickness by tracing – it means more work, but the results are much more to my liking. By controlling line thickness in this way you can give perspective to a completely flat drawing, since line thickness acts as a sort of depth of field (the thicker the line, the more focused the drawing). While I "inked" the drawing, I felt the freedom to change proportions and to search for the right amount of detail – not too much since I intended for an animation feel to it, and not too little because it had to hold its ground as an illustration (**Fig.02**).

I decided not to use vector gradients too much because I wanted to aim for a cartoon look, with flat coloring, so the depth had to come from line thickness, color temperature, perspective and depth of field. To that end I used the background. I hadn't really thought much about it until this point, and since the challenge was all about the character I made one that simply reinforced the character and composition. So I went for the complementary color to the general tone of the character and painted a green gradient (**Fig.03**).

I then placed two different layers of trees with different scales and transparency levels, and

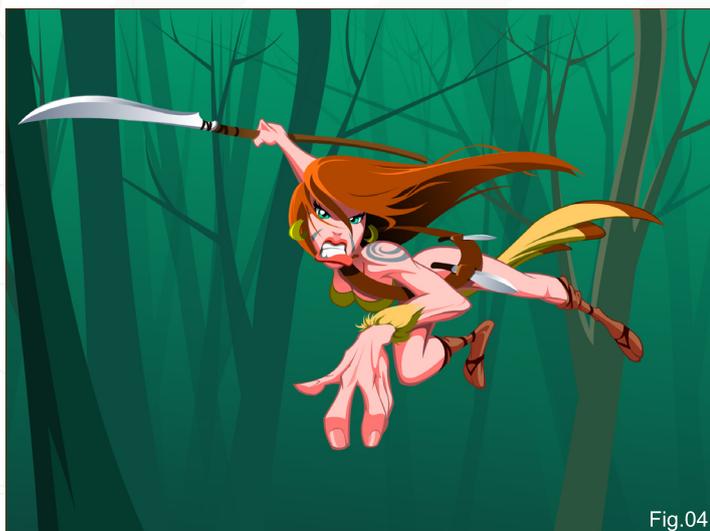


Fig.04

applied different amounts of Gaussian Blur to each one of them (Fig.04). With the background established I added a couple of branches in the foreground and a huge branch connecting both planes, to make it a little more crowded and to better suggest the scale of the trees (Fig.05).

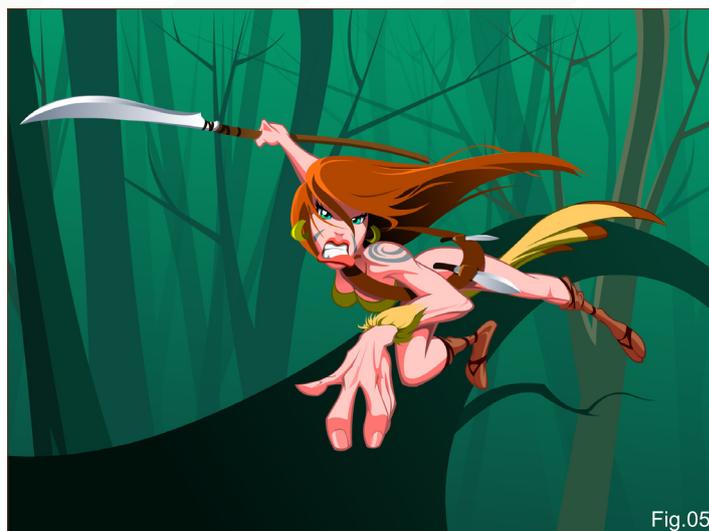


Fig.05

Finally, I painted a heavy border in black and applied a Gaussian Blur to that as well. The effect of this was a gradient darkening towards the image's limits, centering the attention on the character (Fig.06).

At this point, I traced a light beam coming up from the trees and set the layer to Overexpose to complete the effect. I blurred it and carefully deleted those parts where the character blocked the light (Fig.07). The last step was then changing the tone and saturation values of



Fig.06



Fig.07

the background to end up with a greenish blue (Fig.08). As the finishing touch, I added a slight glow to the Amazon character, and overexposed her hair a little (Fig.09 – Final).

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Fig.08



Fig.09