

Wordsmith's short guide to Comic book creator

As I have some inquiries about tips how to make comic I will share some basic hints and procedures which I used in making my comic book.

First of all IMO good comic consist of 3 parts:

1. story
2. graphics
3. "comic features"

1. Story

Story is important because you don't want to present just dull pictures without any reason. Good story could be compiled into few sentences which then could be expanded into sub stories.

For example movie Saving private Ryan: "Squad of Rangers is send to a mission of find a private Ryan in the chaos of Normandy invasion and bring him back because all his brothers fell in combat. During their quest they encounter small city where is Ryan with couple of Airborne paratroopers defending important bridge. Rangers decide to stay and help to defend. During ferocious german attack US soldiers manage to hold until reinforcements arrive. Ryan is safe and returns home."

If you design your comic, try to write a short story - like one Ryan's - in 5 or 6 sentences with compiled story. During making of Comic you could later expand it to sub stories. I tried to make a story which has some action alternated with description parts to keep reader in interest what will happen next. I guess this part I could do better, maybe in next chapter :-)

2. Graphics

Graphics consist of 2 parts - taking screenshots and post-process of pictures. Taking screenshots is tricky, main points to keep in mind are:

- arrange the units and scenes during actual game (when playing CoH), I was using skirmish, but if you have some friend it is much better because you can arrange different unit/scenery combinations
- take screenshots from replays, use time scale x0.25 or pause if needed, move camera around to take scene from different directions, pause is not suitable because it is written in the middle of the screen that is why 0.25 time is better
- pausing scene will also help to disappear the temporary text, like +1Exp or similar
- try to avoid taking screenshots with some disturbance in background (flags, territory lines, fog of war units...) - some of those could be later retouched but it could be hard if it blocks too much picture space, that is why it is important to arrange scenes carefully

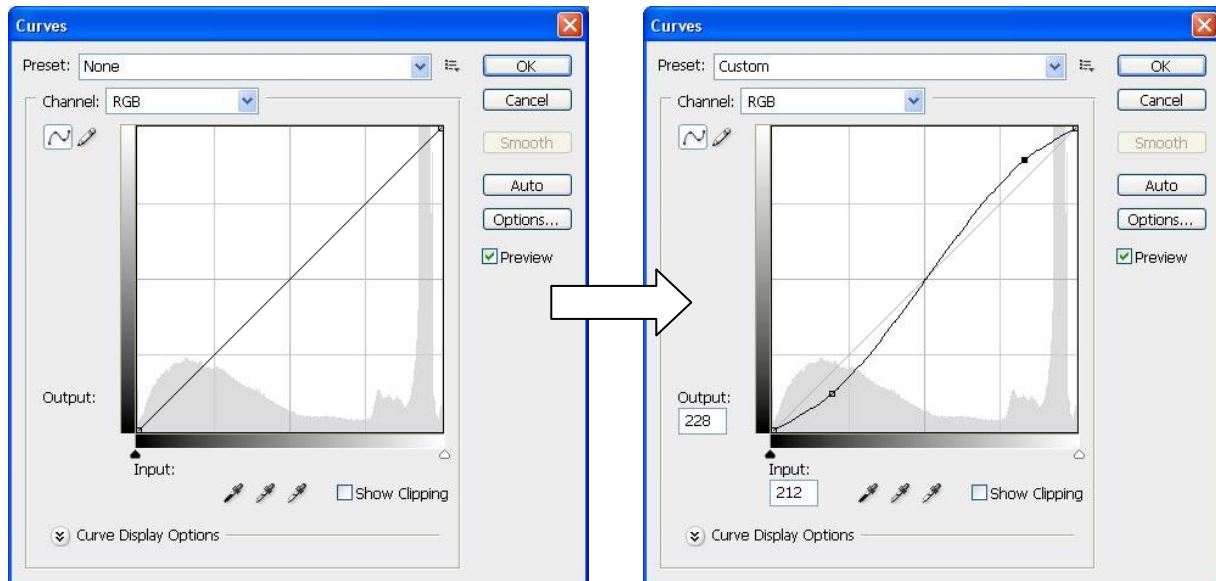
- you can use different CoH maps (means different replays) for same scene in Comic, f.e. I used 9 different replays in about 5 maps

- don't forget to turn off the bottom panel while taking screenshots so whole screen is visible

- leave fog of war turned on, so you don't see other unit's shadows in the background

Post process requires some knowledge of painting program (Photoshop f.e.). Features which I used mostly were following (and in right order I used them when preparing a picture):

- curve adjustment (to adjust pictures to look more natural), here is settings which I used:



note: I used other SW for this curve adjustment since it was easier to change it once on all screenshots - SW for adjustment of Photos, but it could be done in Photoshop too.

- selection tool - to select and cut out only the area which I wanted in Comic, rest was dumped

- resize tool - I used pictures with width from 700-800 pixels if the picture was stretched to full width of A4 page, regular pics had about 500x500 pixels size...

note: maybe in next Comic I will use full size pictures as taken from CoH (1600x1200) to make it look better

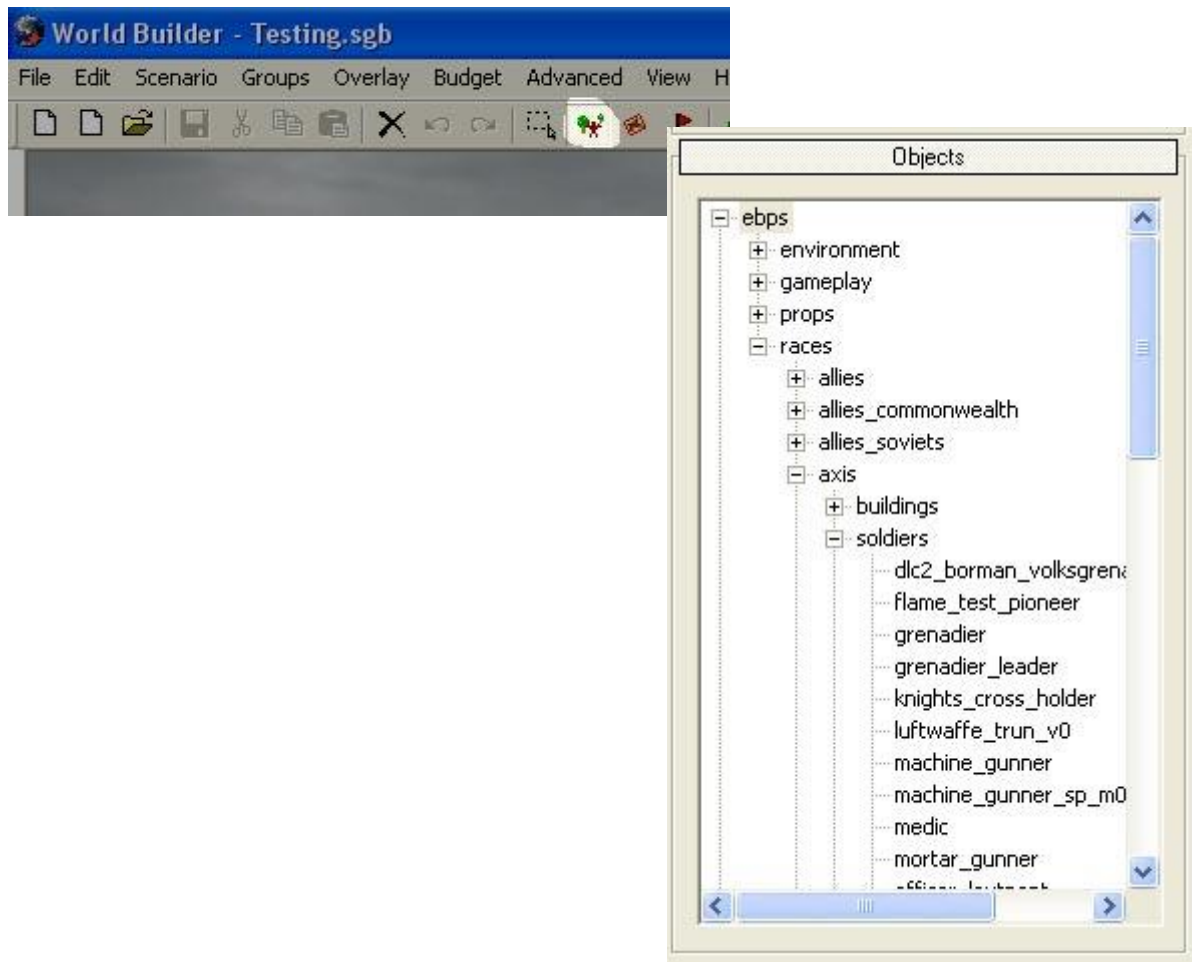
- Clone stamp tool - to retouch some parts of the picture with disturbance (like unit flags, border lines etc.)

- Blur tool - to blur and cover the retouched areas

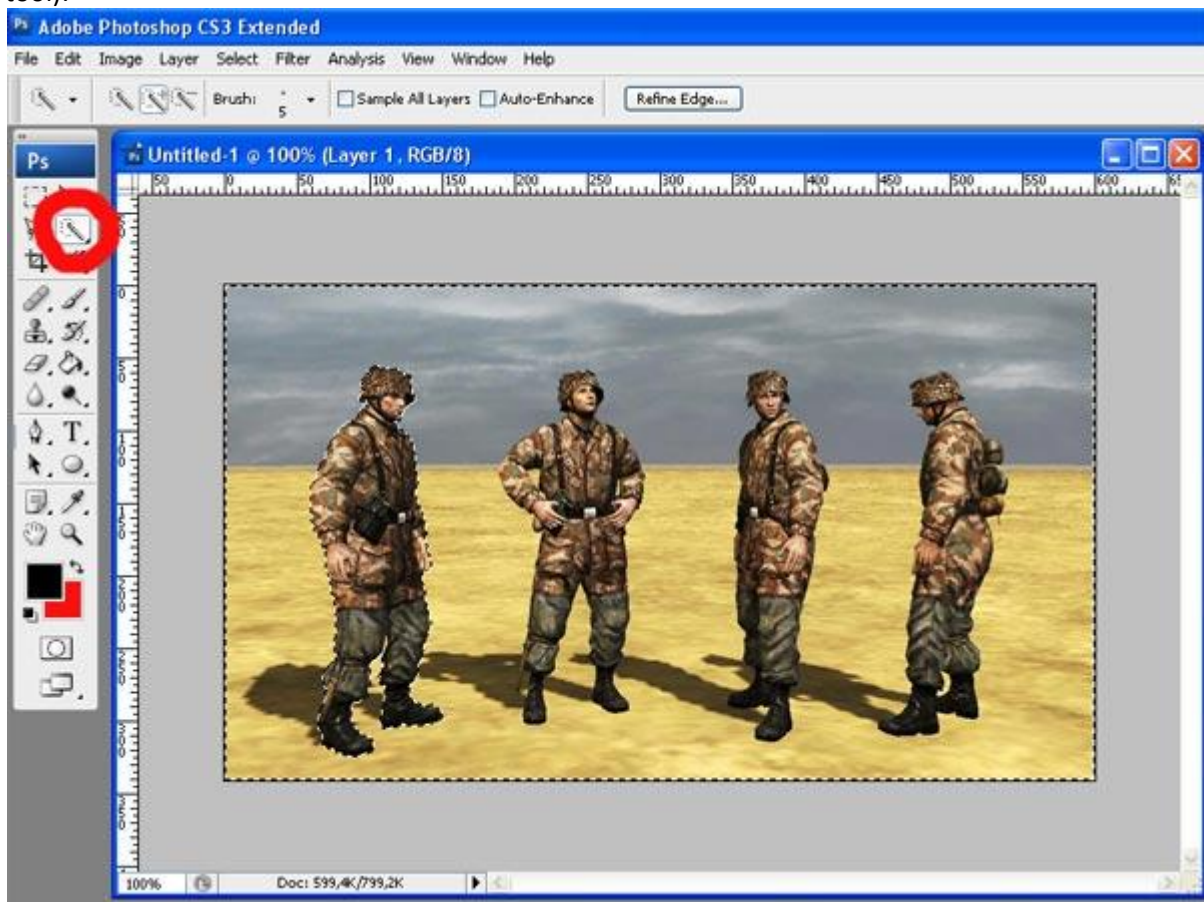
- Healing brush tool - similar to Blur tool



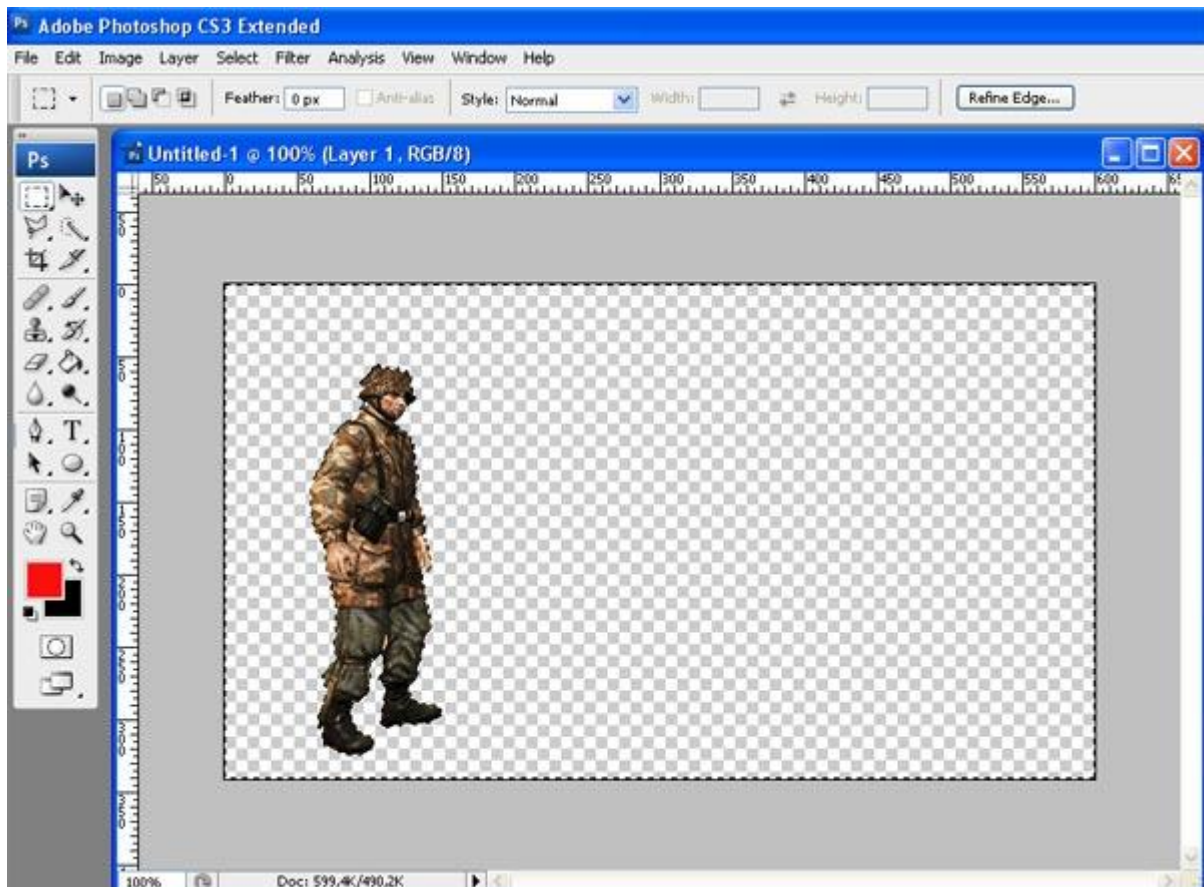
One special process which I used too was combining pictures of character with a background. I prepared a background from standard CoH screenshot and add new layer and there I pasted the picture of character. Such characters (without weapons in hand, staying in pose) I took from CoH Worldbuilder, creating a blank map and adding just models of characters:



After taking screenshot I just mark the selected character with Quick selection tool (or Magic wand tool):



And then deleted all surroundings which leaves pure model:



This I then pasted into prepared background:



3. "comic features"

For "Comic look-a-like" I used these sources as main help, recommend to visit Blambot's page:

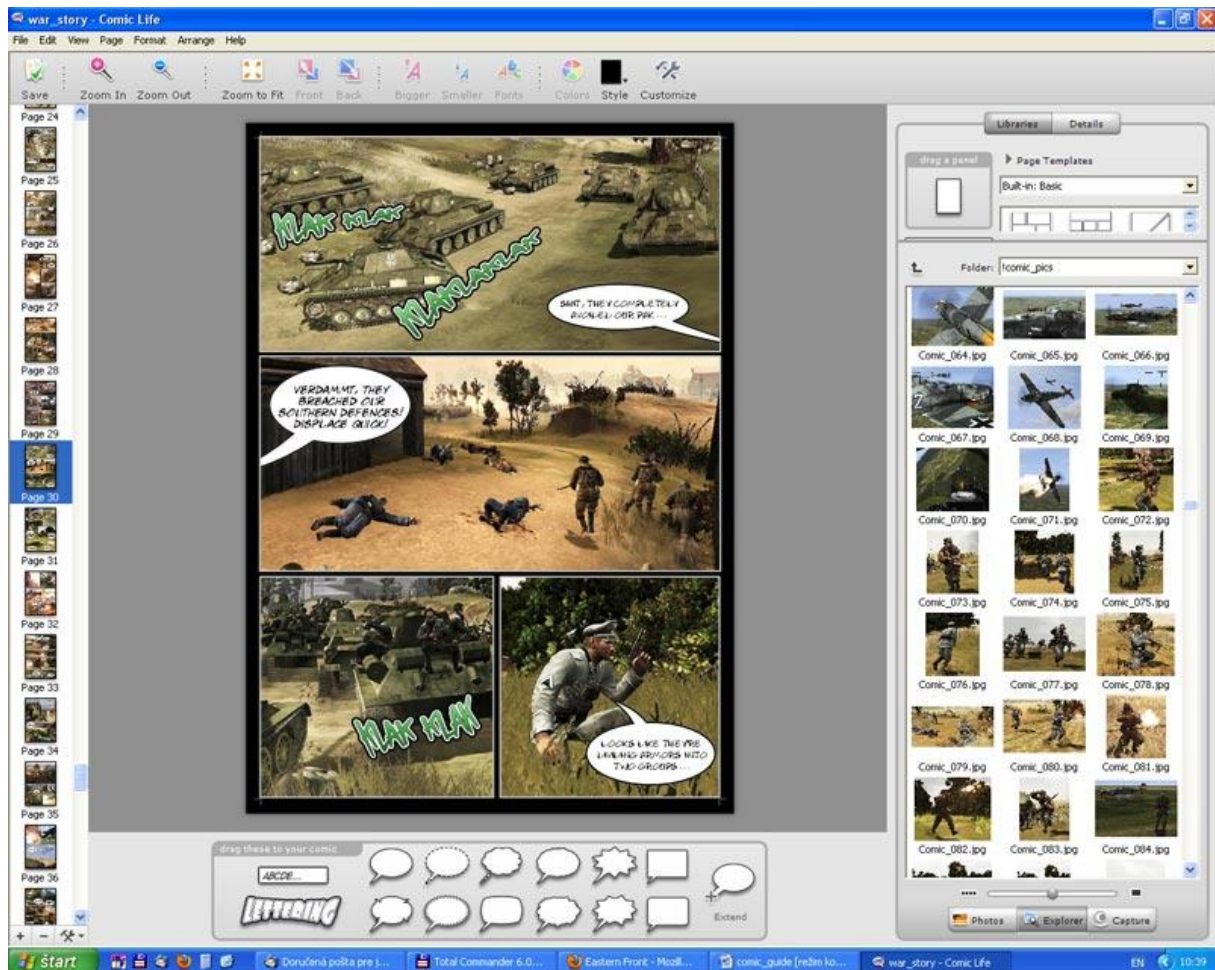
<http://www.blambot.com/>

... very good articles and some free comic fonts

and for creating the final Comic book I used SW Comic life, available here:

<http://plasq.com/>

... there is 30 days trial and SW itself is for very reasonable price 25,- USD



When I used Comic life, I had already most of the pictures prepared. I just later add some more pics, if I realized I need those to keep the story continuity. Hard part was to fit text into those small speech bubbles, I had to revise the text and keep it to minimum. Also I found quite difficult to display sounds with "Lettering" tool as I first had no idea how to display when f.e. a shot of sniper hits the target. I took inspiration from other Comic books then.

That's in short it, hope this helps. If any more tips needed, please ask via PM. Please remember that I'm pure amateur in this and do it only for fun. Good luck with your own Comic books!