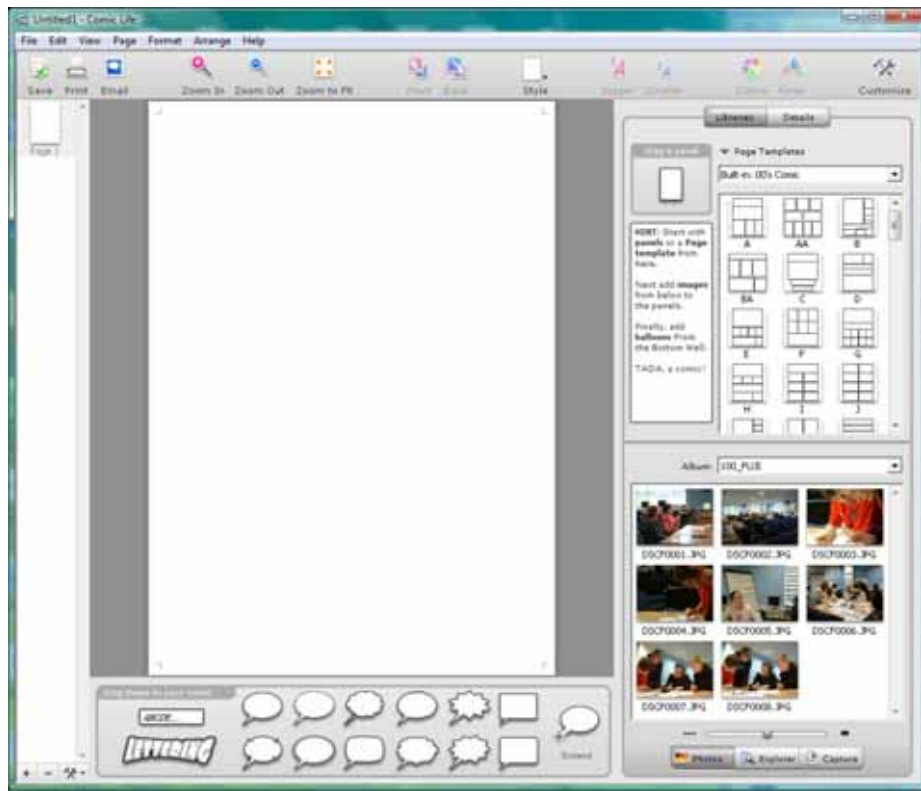
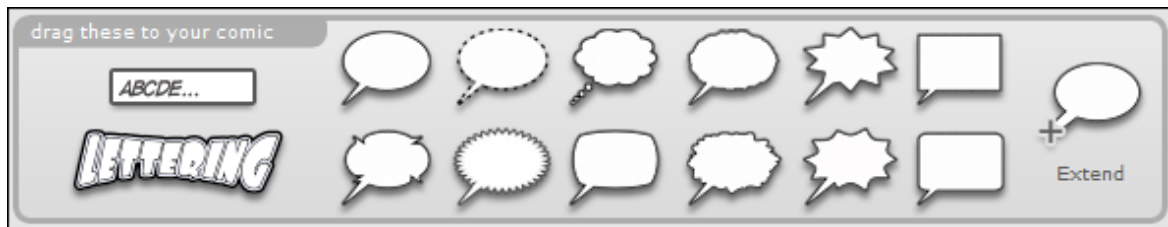


Creating with Comic Life



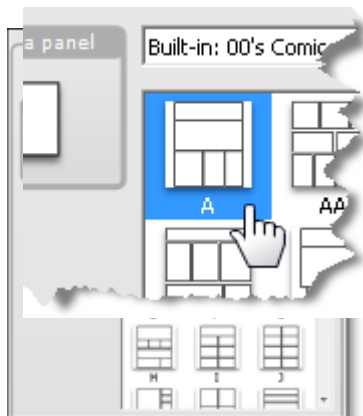


When you first open up the software you will see the screen above. The screen shows a blank page and surrounding it a range of menus with things you can add to the page. This menu allows you to add speech, thought bubbles and dramatic lettering to your page



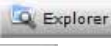

This menu allows you to add panels to your page. In a comic the panels are used to contain the pictures that make up the story and there are lots of quick layouts to get you started as well as a 'drag a panel' button that allows you to create your own panel layouts.

Creating your first page Layout



Before adding pictures to the page you need to create the layout of panels to contain them. I'm going to select the first panel layout 'A' and drag it onto the page.

You should find that the page now matches the icon in the panel layout.

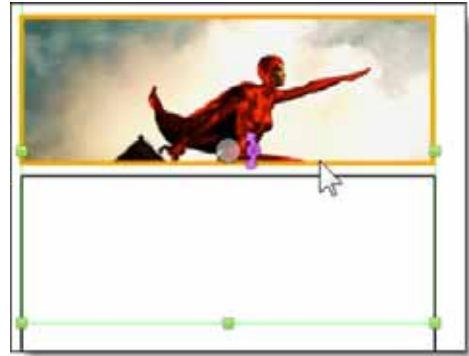
Adding pictures to a panel couldn't be more simple. You just drag them from the album to the panel. By default Comic Life will use your 'My Pictures' folder as the Album. You can click the  Explorer button to look elsewhere on the system or even use the  Capture button to take a picture using an attached webcam.



I have dragged in a picture of a superhero to form the background for the title of my story. If the picture is bigger than or smaller than the panel Comic Life will try its best to resize the image to fit the panel. My image has been cropped slightly as the panel is a different shape to



the image. It is possible to adjust the size and angle of the panel to fit the photograph by dragging the handles on the edges of the frame. If you click twice on the picture you can move the picture within the frame and resize it by dragging the handles. The frame acts like a letterbox in that you can only see the part of your picture that is inside the boundary of the frame. This allows you to create some interesting crop effects. I'm going to move my image so that the woman's head is in the frame. You aren't restricted to one picture per frame either. If you click the image, then press the alt key you can drop another image onto the panel. Useful if you want to add a transparent gif of a flying saucer over your superhero pointing to the skies.



Making your image look more like a comic



Naturally the image I have chosen looks like comic artwork anyway. The images you are using probably don't. Don't worry though the software has a feature that allows you to give your images an instant comic effect. Check out my image of 'Tin Foil Boy' By selecting (double clicking) the image it will bring up the style menu. Dropping down the list will bring up a range of comic styles you can apply to your image. By clicking the 'Details' button on the right of the screen you will also see the 'filters' drop down Here you will find more ways to change your image. My

favourites are the 'painted' or 'comicyfy' ones. Here I have applied 'painted 2' to my image. A word of advice; using the same style throughout your comic will give you a much more consistent look than chopping and changing so its best to choose one effect and stick to it.



Adding Dramatic Text to your page



Next you will want to add a title to your page. To do this pick the 'Lettering' tool and drag it over the first frame. The lettering box will pop up allowing you to set the font and change the text. Change your text to 'The Adventures Of...' and click 'Place Lettering'. You should now see lettering appear on



your page. Using the blue handles you can stretch individual parts of the text to create warped text. You can also rotate it by using the purple arrow in the centre of the text. Have a go at positioning the text for dramatic effect.

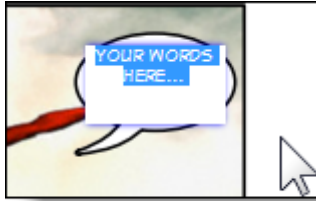


Clicking the 'Style' button will allow you to choose from a range of text styles or if you want to be totally creative you could highlight the text and click on the 'Details' button. This will bring up a panel

allowing you to edit everything about your lettering from colours to fonts and styles. I'm going to choose the style called 'Blam' and edit it so that the text is yellow with a blue outline.



Adding Speech and narrative



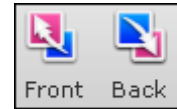
To add speech or thought bubbles to the page simply drag them to the panel you want them to appear in. Replace 'Your words here...' with your text. You can also resize the speech and thoughts as well as moving the tail (by sliding the blue dot) and adding a tail (by clicking the orange +) if you want more than one person to speak. Clicking twice on the bubble lets you edit the text. Right clicking a bubble allows you to align text. Opening the details panel allows you to change things like the colour and font as well as choosing from a range of styles.



You can also add a narrative text box by dragging one onto the page. Check the details panel to make changes to the text box or choose a style.

Other useful stuff you need to know

Layering - As with any other DTP program items are added to the page in layers. You can change the order of the layers by selecting an object, right clicking and using the bring forward and send backward commands. There is also a button for it on the top menu.



Changing Styles - The style button gives different options depending on what you select. Click on the page and you can change the colour of the background



Change the View - You can zoom in and out to have a more detailed view of your page. Zoom to fit shows you the whole page.



Adjust your text - You can make quick adjustments to the size font and 'color' with this tool.



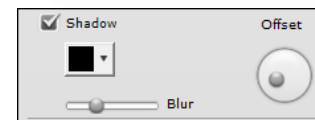
Add or delete pages with this tool - You can also add template pages



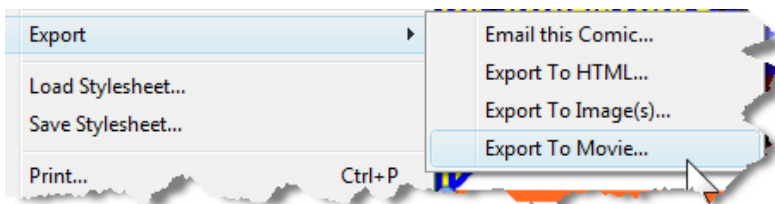
Making Irregular shaped panels - You can change the panels from the default rectangles to other shapes by selecting a panel, clicking on details and ticking the 'Irregular' box and selecting the number of sides. Choosing 8, for example, will allow you edit the blue nodes on the rectangular box to create an irregular shape.



Adding a shadow - Ticking the shadow box adds a drop-shadow to whatever you have selected



Exporting your finished work



Obviously you can print your comic out. With the software you can also distribute your comic in a number of other ways. You can email it, export it as webpage or images or even create a movie file. Great if you want to recreate the title

sequence from Grange Hill. I guess only the teachers will remember that one ;-)



You can download Comic Life for Mac and Windows from www.plasq.com