



## Comics for the digital age

Disney Publishing brings comics to a new generation using end-to-end workflow based on Adobe® tools



Disney Publishing has a 60-year tradition of publishing comics, fueled by a loyal following and legendary characters like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. But times have changed in the comic book business. People today are accustomed to content that includes fast-paced action and computer-generated animations. Comics fans are also spending less time with books and more time on PCs and the web.



Disney Digicomics, created and distributed using Adobe technologies—including the Adobe Flash Platform and Adobe Creative Suite 4 Master Collection software—offers traditional Disney comic stories on the web and handheld devices. With Digicomics, the animated cartoons flow flawlessly from one screen to the next, and feature a fun, engaging mix of visual effects such as fades and dissolves and audio effects.

*“We estimate that, in working with the Adobe Flash Platform, the development cost and time is 30% less than using other environments; plus, we can achieve faster return on investment because of the ubiquitous reach of the Adobe Flash Player.”*

**Dario Di Zanni, manager, Disney Publishing’s New Media business unit**

Recognizing the need to reach audiences where they spend their time, provide an engaging, fun complement to printed comic books, and open new revenue streams, Disney comics have gone digital. In 2009, Disney launched Disney Digicomics—an evolution of comics available on select handheld device technologies—with the first digital comics starring Mickey Mouse.

Created and distributed using an array of Adobe technologies, including the Adobe Flash® Platform and Adobe Creative Suite® 4 Master Collection software, Disney Digicomics offers traditional Disney comic stories in panel-by-panel transitioned/audio augmented format on handheld devices including Playstation Portable, with distribution on mobile devices planned for the future. Consumers can purchase stories

through a third-party digital comic store where they can also find and download the free Disney Digicomics Player application needed to read Digicomics content.

With Digicomics, the animated cartoons flow flawlessly from one screen to the next, and feature a fun, engaging mix of visual effects such as fades and dissolves and audio effects. Users can customize their own playlists, creating tailored lists of Digicomics based on their favorite characters or stories.

“We want to reach and engage with people where they spend their time, which is increasingly on PCs and mobile. Our goal is to let comics fans enjoy content on their devices with a rich application interface and an experience of exceptional quality,” says Dario Di Zanni, manager for Disney Publishing’s New Media business unit.

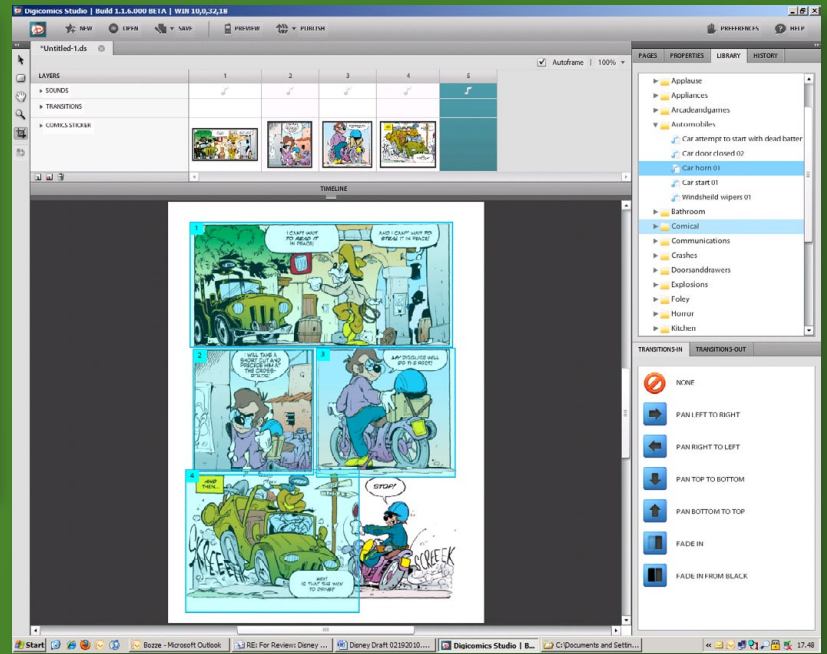
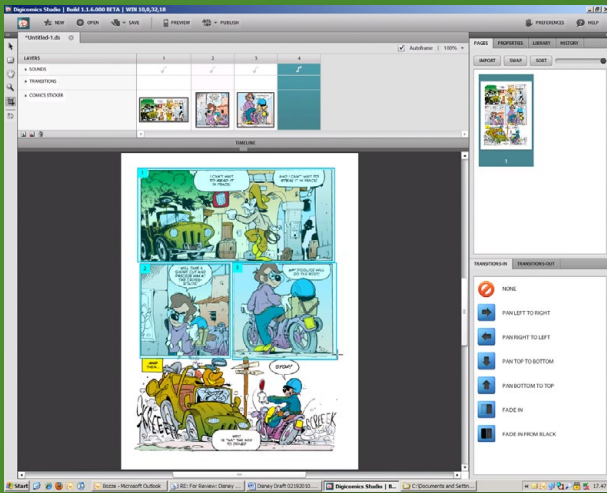
### Reinventing comics

The New Media business unit, located in Milan, Italy, is the epicenter of Disney’s comics business, generating the bulk of Disney’s comic book content for global distribution. Di Zanni and his colleague Gianfranco Cordara, managing editor for Disney Publishing’s New Media business unit, were tasked with understanding how comics could be delivered on new media devices.

After showing a prototype to their boss in Milan, they went to Disney offices in London, New York, and eventually to Disney’s main headquarters in California. With all of Disney enthused about their idea, the New Media team started eagerly getting Digicomics off the ground.

### An end-to-end workflow with Adobe software

Cordara and Di Zanni worked with Milan-based creative studio Mutado to bring Disney’s legendary comics into the digital realm. The creative team at Mutado started by using Adobe Photoshop® CS4 Extended and Illustrator® CS4 software to finesse graphics for the digital comics. According to Cordara, Photoshop and Illustrator enabled the team to produce graphics that uniquely reflect the quality and look of the celebrated Disney comic books.



The Adobe Flash Platform streamlined development of Digicomics Studio and the application backend. Adobe Flex Builder and the Flex framework were used to design a custom rich player application that manages shopping and content delivery. The Adobe AIR application, Digicomics Studio, helps deliver the digital assets for play on a wide range of platforms.

“Adobe offers a high level of integration among the Creative Suite tools and provides an end-to-end workflow from design through authoring and deployment,” says Cordara. “This was key to our ability to maintain a consistent, high-quality look to the comics on a wide array of platforms.”

### Streamlined development

Developers on the project tapped Adobe Flex® Builder™ and the Flex framework to design a custom rich player application that manages shopping and content delivery. Flex Builder helped them manage all the development phases, from coding and testing to debugging. Integration with Subversion (SVN) allowed the team to efficiently distribute coding across a widespread group to accelerate development.

Mutado also built an Adobe AIR® application—Digicomics Studio—that helps deliver the digital assets for play on a wide range of platforms. According to the Mutado team, Flex in conjunction with Adobe AIR offered a powerful framework to develop a desktop application with high performance and a common user experience across Microsoft® Windows®, Mac, and Linux® systems.

“We found that Flex and AIR are the perfect solution for developing back-end powerful conversion engines and distributable desktop applications for multiple platforms,” says Di Zanni.

According to Cordara and Di Zanni, the Adobe Flash Platform dramatically streamlined development of Digicomics Studio and the application backend. Flash technology also simplified localization of the comics for global consumption through support of the Unicode, a universal character encoding standard used to represent text for computer processing.

“We considered other development tools, but we knew from experience that they would make programming and development much tougher,” says Di Zanni. “With other platforms, we would face the challenge of localization and never-ending updates to each version of each comic for play on different devices—and we would have a difficult time delivering premium content in a way that is fulfilling for users. We estimate that, in working with the Adobe Flash Platform, the development cost and time is 30% less than using other environments; plus, we can achieve faster return on investment because of the ubiquitous reach of the Adobe Flash Player.”

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### Challenge

- Deliver Disney’s legendary comics on PCs and handheld devices
- Provide an immersive, fun experience and exceptional quality
- Maximize audience reach
- Minimize development time and effort

### Solution

- Leverage Adobe Creative Suite 4 Master Collection to convert comics to digital form for delivery on a variety of platforms
- Tapped the Adobe Flash Platform to create a robust backend and deliver Digicomics to a global audience

### Benefits

- Provided consistent, quality user experience across platforms
- Delivered sticky, fun user experience
- Took advantage of ubiquitous reach of the Adobe Flash Player
- Reduced development time and cost by 30%

### Toolkit

- Adobe Creative Suite 4 Master Collection. Components used include:
  - Adobe Illustrator CS4
  - Adobe Photoshop CS4 Extended
- Adobe Flash Platform. Components used include:
  - Adobe AIR
  - Adobe Flex Builder
  - Flex



The creative team behind Disney Digicomics used Adobe Photoshop CS4 Extended and Adobe Illustrator CS4 software to finesse graphics for the digital comics, to uniquely reflect the quality and look of the celebrated Disney comic books. The Adobe Creative Suite end-to-end workflow, from design through authoring and deployment, was key to maintaining a consistent, high-quality look to the comics on a wide array of platforms

*“At the end of the day, the success of Digicomics is a matter of product quality, user experience, and broad audience reach. Adobe Creative Suite and the Adobe Flash Platform provide an end-to-end workflow that helped us achieve all three.”*

**Gianfranco Cordara, managing editor, Disney Publishing’s New Media business unit**

**Greater reach, richer content**

Digicomics relies on Flash technology for high-quality delivery. With Flash technology, the team can develop a single version of a comic book and deliver it to multiple platforms, reaching a wide audience and providing a sticky, fun, and consistent user experience. Adobe Flash technology also allows Disney to preserve the exceptional level of visual quality that is the hallmark of everything the company produces.

“Using the Adobe Flash Platform, we can deliver to multiple platforms at the same time and we are reaching a broad market that is changing every day,” explains Cordara. “The Flash Platform enabled us to easily author files in

multiple languages for global distribution and provide a fulfilling user experience—this was key for upholding Disney’s brand and reputation for premium content,” adds Di Zanni.

**A platform for the future**

In the near future, Disney plans to create more Digicomics, extend its delivery into more markets, and prepare comics for delivery on set-top boxes and potentially other devices. The company has an archive of 50,000 stories waiting to be converted to Digicomics for electronic consumption.

“At the end of the day, the success of Digicomics is a matter of product quality, user experience, and broad audience reach. Adobe Creative Suite and the Adobe Flash Platform provide an end-to-end workflow that helped us achieve all three,” says Cordara. “With help from Adobe, we are bringing an interactive and fun experience not only to young readers, but also to grown-up comics enthusiasts around the world—right on their PCs.”



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