

# JUDGE DREDD

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMIC CHARACTER



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# JUDGE DREDD

The development of the comic character

by

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# Introduction

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As a comic fan of Judge Dredd and the publication 2000A.D. since its start in 1977, I feel I have gained a vast amount of knowledge about the character. I will attempt to use this knowledge to analyse the development of the character in an organised fashion. So far, there has been relatively little descriptive and analytical information wrote about him, which is a shame, because he is a character of such calibre. There have been very few publications dealing with the historical background and creation of Judge Dredd, only the odd magazine article. There has been no in depth reviews on his world, Mega City 1, and no detailed analysis of the social concerns that arise in certain stories. In addition, I have never seen any essays on the artists behind Dredd's creation. Therefore, I feel writing a thesis on Judge Dredd is a challenge: my hope is that with the combination of the articles that are available and my own experience in reading the comic, I can produce an interesting and original assessment of the British comic book character Judge Dredd that has become a phenomenon in the comic book world.





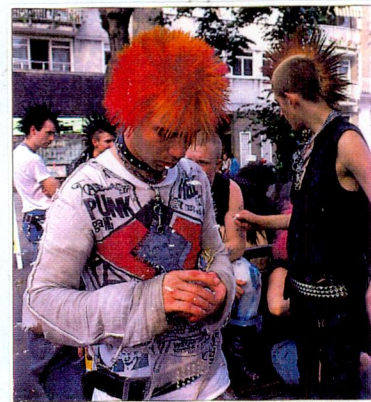


# Tales before Dreddtime

During the mid 1970s a new style started to emerge through music, fashion, science fiction movies, graphics and comic strips. This new style was called punk.

" the new age of punk rejuvenated street fashion and gave expression to the emerging post apocalyptic spirit of the age." (Cotton, 1990, p.23)

Punks expressed this style through their appearance and lifestyle.(illus.1.) They could identify with this style because it conveyed anarchy, the end of order and ideals of rebellion.



illus.1.

Soon punk rock and fashion was beginning to have a major effect on film-makers, graphic designers, sculptors, animators and, of course comic strip artists who used this style within their work to visually capture the spirit of the times. Films like Mad Max and Blade Runner had visually a clear distinctive post apocalyptic style and a definite emphasis on punk characterisation. A futuristic setting is particularly common and there were more punk style criminals than law enforcement officers. This was partly due to the film creators who spent some time in London during the '70s when punk society was at its peak.

" By 1977, punk rock was beginning to have a major effect upon London life." (Wozencroft, 1988, p.5)

Designers working or studying in London at this time, Neville Brody, Jamie Reid and Pete Saville, became attracted to this punk environment and used it within their designs. In the words of the graphic designer Neville Brody,



"Punk hit me fast, and it gave me the confidence I needed."  
( Wozencroft, 1988, p.5 )

It even changed the attitudes of certain designers, An examination of graphic design during this period shows just how valuable, effective and influential the punk environment had on the changing role of the designer. The comic book scene at this time wasn't really making quite an impact on its audience, unlike its visual counterparts. Comic sales were dropping gradually since the mid-sixties and into the early '70s. After the boom of the sixties, there soon became little demand or interest in the comic artform.

"Many of today's fans would have grown up on comics of the 1970s, which were clearly suffering from the aftermath of the boom period of the Sixties and had failed to keep up with new trends." ( Stringer, 1992, p.39 )

The comic scene was becoming dull and boring; there were no real heroes that kids could identify with anymore. Dan Dare, of the 1950s Eagle comic, was the last of the great adventure heroes who had great zeal and role model qualities. In the early '70s there seemed to be only mirror images of Dan Dare, in comics which were deficient both in story and art. Imitation had become contagious within comics since the success of Eagle. Comic spin offs like Jag, Valiant, Hurricane and Lion were just some of the few that became laborious and readers of that time began to turn away from comics because of their lack of originality.

" By and large, fans had ignored previous British heroes, considered to be dull and characterless compared to those of the dynamic American heroes."  
( Stringer, 1993, p.39 )

So at that time there were particular weaknesses in British comics; those weaknesses were lack of originality, repetition and lack of focus on a particular hero. Comics were in trouble and something had to be done. There had to be a dramatic change in the way comic strips would engage their audience; there had to be something new, original and different.



In 1975, that something new, original and different arrived. The comic publishers IPC created the hard edge comic Battle and, a year later, Action. Their approach to success was to create a comic that would reflect modern trends in other media; that would fit in with what was happening in society at that particular time.

“ Action was born out of an attempt by IPC to turn around the long running decline in the sales of comics, which had begun into the mid-sixties. ”  
( Barker, 1989, p.2 )

They didn't just want to aim it at middle class school boys, but to broaden the range. They knew that punk was at its peak in Britain in the mid '70s, so they decided to aim the new comics at this category of reader as well.

“A dialogue was thus created which made it possible for those close to the punk generation to look on the comics as their friend.” (Barker, 1989, p276.)

With Action's violent content and themes of adolescent punk rebellion, teenagers of that time were able to identify with it. So, Action became a success attracting more than 150,000 readers. After a wave of criticism , due to its excessive violence, Action was withdrawn a year later with the comic Battle.

Seemingly the comic was portraying forms of violence and delinquency. Some of its themes closely resembled those found in films such as Jaws, Rollerball and Dirty Harry. However, the comics were not considered to be the right type of entertainment for a young teenager. Although Action and Battle failed to achieve longevity, their popularity paved the way for 2000A.D. and, of course, the birth of a new hero, Judge Dredd.







# The Birth of Judge Dredd

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Judge Dredd first appeared in issue 2 of the weekly comic 2000A.D. on March 5th 1977. The character was originally created by editor Pat Mills, writer John Wagner and artist Carlos Ezquerra.

In 1977 IPC gave Pat Mills a brief to create a new science-fiction adventure comic. This comic was to be known as 2000A.D. Mills worked on adventure comics before, such as Battle Weekly and Action, but never a comic that had science fiction as its main theme. He was so excited by the idea that he decided to write all the stories for the first issue.

"Among the many ideas he had was an occult story with the tentative title Judge Dredd." ( MacManus, 1994, p.18 )

Even though Mills had a name for this character, it was still the tip of the iceberg until he collaborated with fellow writer John Wagner. Wagner had this idea going around in his head for ages about this cop of the future, a man who could be Judge, Jury and Executioner rolled into one. When Wagner told Mills about this idea he realised it was exactly the portrait of a character which would fit in with his occult story titled "Judge Dredd." The name itself was evocative:

" It brought the character to life, summing up in two words his grim dedication to the law" ( MacManus, 1994, p.18 )

Wagner, in creating Dredd, relied on his experience in creating other violent characters. When he started work for Valiant, the most popular character was Captain Hurricane, which was a funny World War 2 story. He then decided to create more violent storylines with characters such as One Eyed Jack and Paco for the comic. These proved to be far more popular than Captain Hurricane.



Here is what Wagner had to say about the two characters he created for Valiant:

" From the first issue One Eyed Jack appeared in, he got three times the number of votes Captain Hurricane did. I also introduced a story called Paco, about a dog, a bit like White Fang or Call of the Wild. That did twice as well as Captain Hurricane" ( Nesbit, 1992, p.22)

So Wagner had gained experience and knowledge working in comics and was able to experiment with tough characters such as One Eyed Jack and Paco, which had popular readership. He knew the tough guy comic character was in popular demand and could bring greater success if it were taken further. As he says here:

" This showed me that the tough man story could work." (Nesbit, 1992, p.22)

So he developed it further and came up with a concept based on Mills' title, Judge Dredd. It was the film world that helped Wagner develop the concept of the character and it was one film in particular that gave the writer the inspiration he needed to develop it. That film was Dirty Harry.

Wagner said:

" I suppose you could say the genesis of Dredd was in Dirty Harry and every nasty hero or villain I'd ever seen who caught my fancy." (Nesbit 1992, p.20 )

The film was hitting the headlines and became a success when it opened in 1975, starring Clint Eastwood as a no-holds-barred cop. Its success was due to its excessive violence and Eastwood's role ( Harry Callahan) as an unsympathetic anti-hero.

"So it became clear to Wagner that an anti-hero, a person to love and hate was becoming popular in every form of media; film, television, etc. During an interview, Wagner said one thing he learned from his time in comics was that people love a bastard." (Nesbit, 1992, p.20 )

Wagner was intrigued with the love/hate combination in a character and the idea that maybe a Dirty Harry character could be replicated in comics, into







Judge Dredd. But Wagner didn't want to create an exact copy of Dirty Harry because it was done before in a comic character called Dredger. So he decided to go one step further, to make Judge Dredd even more violent, bold and unsympathetic than Dirty Harry.

Now that Wagner in collaboration with Mills had the name and concept of a new original comic character, his next step was to show what Dredd looked like in his appearance. According to one of the early editors of 2000A.D.,

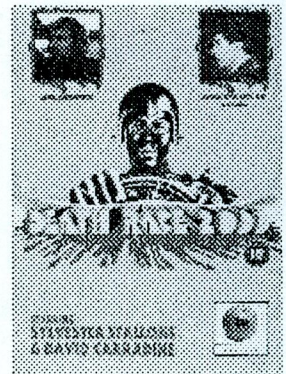
"The question was - who would visualise the grim guardian of the law?"  
( MacManus, 1994, p.18. )

The artist in question who came up with the first visualisation of Judge Dredd was Spanish born artist Carlos Sanchez Ezquerra. Mills and Wagner had seen the work of this artist as he had done several commissions for Battle Picture Weekly. Both writers were impressed by his striking visuals. Due to Ezquerra's unique style and boldness of line, Mills and Wagner agreed that he was the best person to complete the final stages in the construction of Dredd, the visualisation of the character.

In 1976 Wagner had noticed a poster for a science fiction film in the newspaper.(illus.1.) It was this poster that was to be the starting point for creating Dredd.

As Wagner related,

" At the time we were creating Dredd there was a film called Death Race 2000. All I saw was the advertising poster, I cut it out of a newspaper. It was a picture of a guy with a black helmet on with very little of his face showing "  
(Nesbit, 1992, p.23)



illus.1.

Wagner sent the front cover image for Death Race 2000 to Ezquerra. The writer thought this would be a good base for the artist and maybe spark some ideas, developing the character's appearance from it.







" When Wagner sent it to Carlos, the artist came back with a far more elaborate image than I'd imagined " ( Nesbit, 1992, p.23 ) (illus.2.)

Wagner and Mills were thrilled with the results and es-  
querra was now ready for his slot in the 2000A.D team.

" Carlos had delivered the most exciting looking  
character British comics had seen in years."  
(MacManus, 1994, p.19 )



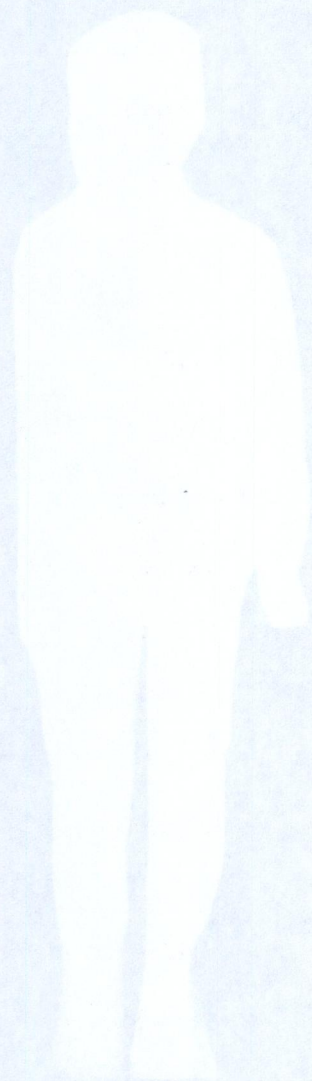
illus.2.



illus.3.

It is interesting to compare the hooded guy on the poster of Death Race 2000 and the first sketches of Judge Dredd. It is also interesting to know that Ezquerra was living in London at the time he was creating Dredd, a time when punk tribalism was at its highest, especially in London. Although Death Race 2000 was a major source for Dredd's appearance, Ezquerra was also interested in the tough rebel qualities of punk fashion. The black leather costume worn by Dredd clear-







ly resembles punk costumes. However, punks in turn became influenced by Dredd's appearance, particularly by the artist's introduction of new tools to Dredd's costume.

"He was clad in a Black uniform (whose breast chain and badge predated punk fashion )" ( MacManus, 1994, p.20 )

So the breast chain and badge became new accessories in punk fashion due to Dredd's image. (illus.3.).

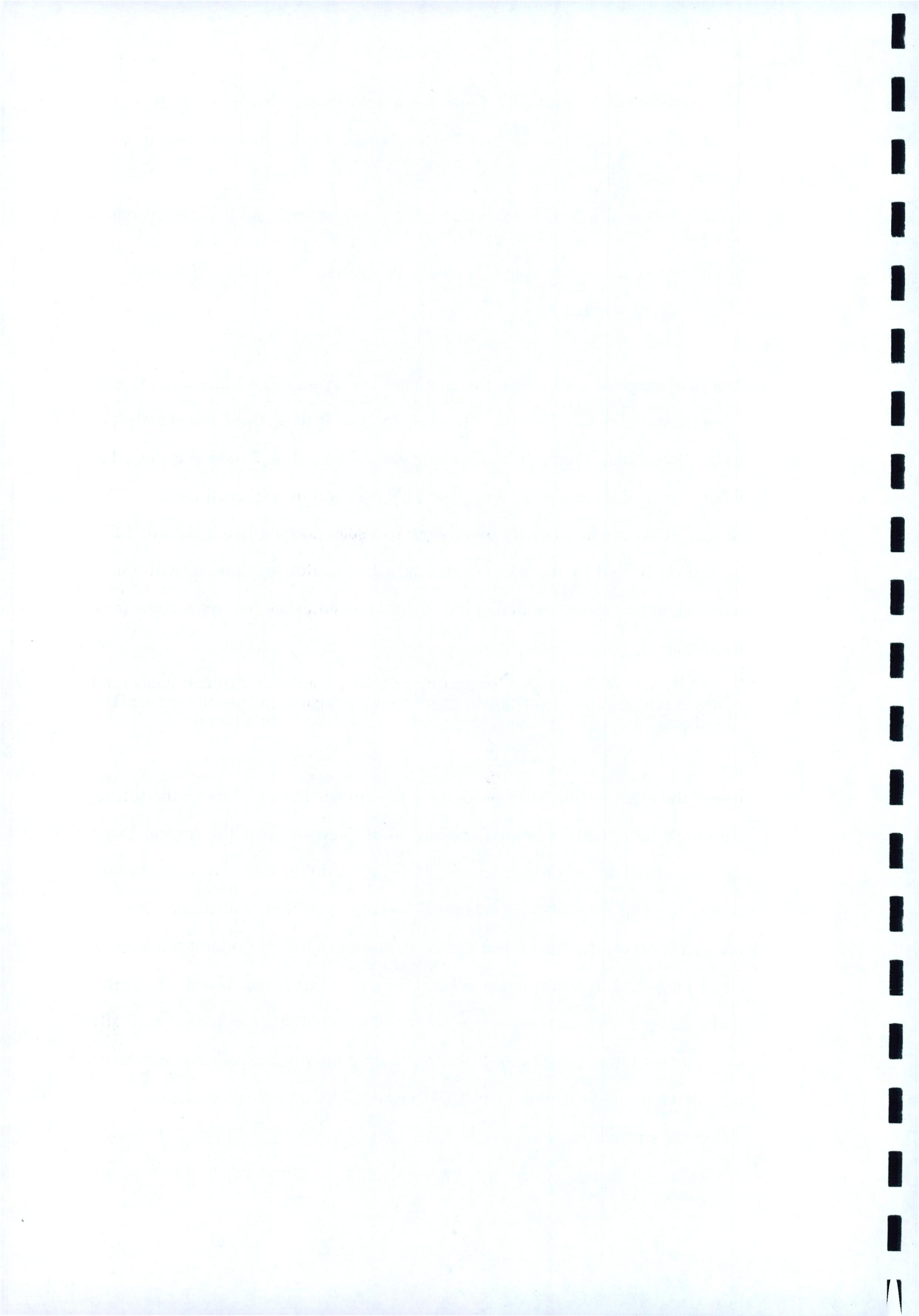
The final stage of visualising the character was complete. Mills and Wagner were overwhelmed by the finished sketches, but it wasn't just the sketches of Judge Dredd that caught their attention. It was the setting Dredd was placed in when Carlos Ezquerro drew a futuristic background in one small picture. This caught Mill's eye immediately because he had seen nothing like it before. Mills was so captivated by the sketches that he asked Carlos to come up with more, only bigger and more detailed. Like the initial Dredd sketches, what came back was amazing.

"A city where skyscrapers soared miles into the air, a city of countless road levels which curled ever upwards without any visible means of support: The Judges' City" ( MacManus, 1994, p.20 ) (illus. 4 - next page).

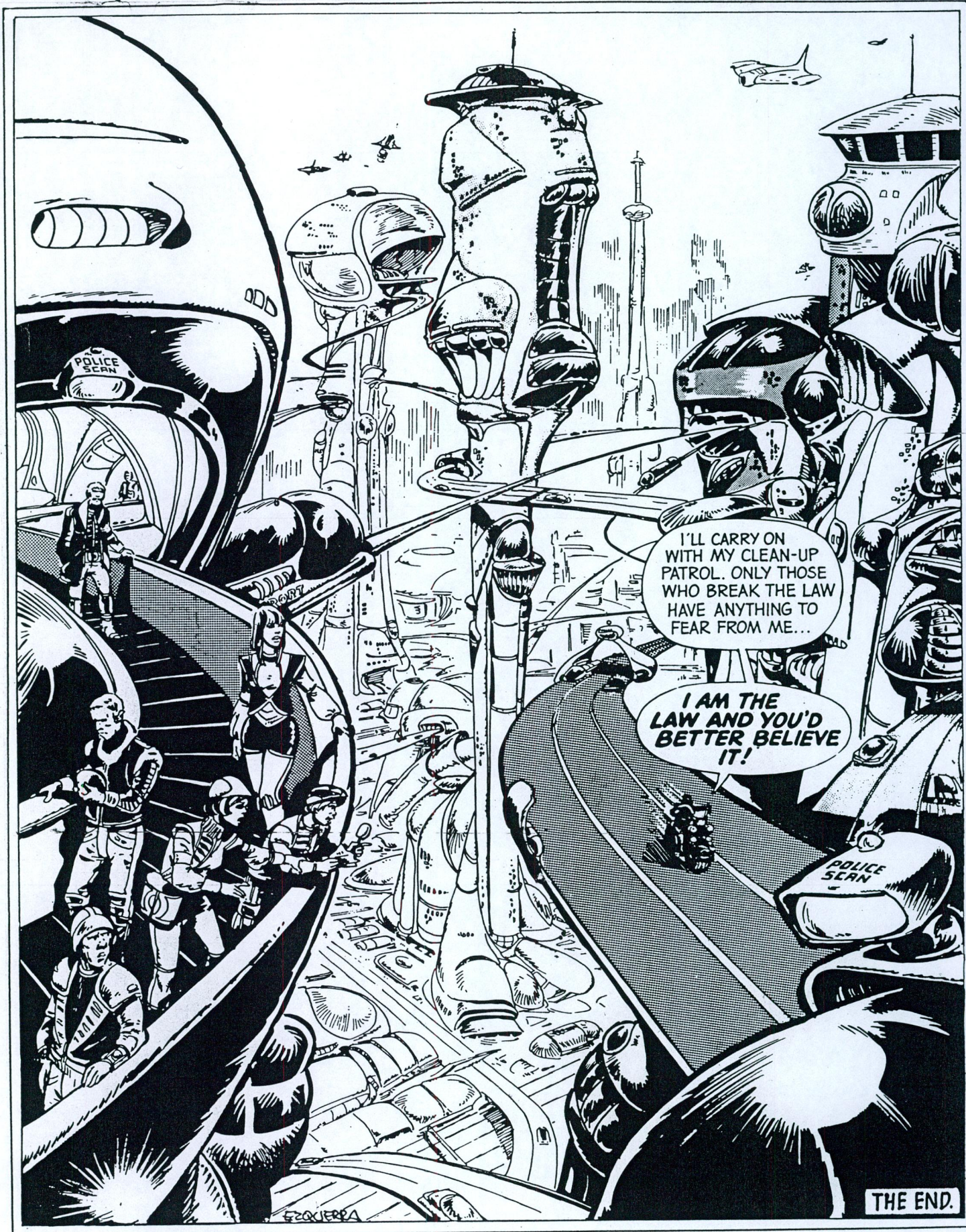
It was the exact setting Mills needed for this futuristic cop, a city of the future. Although he initially intended the city to be New York of the future, Doug Church, visual advisor for the comic, 2000A.D., didn't think New York was appropriate. This futuristic city was much too big to be New York alone. The entire east coast of America would be a more appropriate description for this mass city, a mega city. It was at this point that the city got its name. It was also at this point that problems started to set in for Mills and Wagner, because originally they had set Judge Dredd in a city of ordinary crimes of the present. However, now that a futuristic way-out city had been created, the crimes committed had to reflect the surroundings.

"It was felt a bank robbery was too conventional a crime for Dredd's future."  
( Bishop, 1994, p.28 )









illus.4.







They had to be way-out crimes, that meant way-out storylines. So it was back to the drawing boards for both writers, as their original storyline had to be discarded. The most difficult obstacle for Wagner and Mills was the first installment. They had to come up with a story that would allow Dredd's qualities to develop and emphasise that this was a cop of the future. The first installment was of great importance; it had to be dealt with very carefully and a great deal of thought had to go into it. When a comic first communicates with its audience, it has to make instant impact straight away, because first impressions last and will also determine whether the readers will buy the comic a second time.

So as I said previously Wagner and Mills' original script didn't match up to the superior futuristic visual drawings of Ezquerra, because they thought the crimes committed in the story were too basic and conventional. Banal crimes such as jay walking and bank robberies just didn't seem right for a crime in Dredd's future city. So as the original script was discarded, Wagner and Mills had to come up with a new script that would accommodate the character and settings. It was Mills that came up with a possible answer: a fugitive who could change his face by popping into a "new you" face parlour where citizens could undergo genetic surgery and emerge transformed within minutes. The killer felt so confident he wouldn't be recognised that he even wished Dredd good morning. "Not for you citizen" came back the reply. Dredd had identified him through voice tapes. This was a perfect solution for a story to reflect both the feel of the city and the mechanics of the law.

Even though it had all the qualities for a future Dredd story, Mills felt it wasn't the right type of story for the first installment because it didn't transmit direct information across to the reader about what Judge Dredd and the Judge system stood for. So Mills created a story that focussed the reader's attention straight away, and this was the story to be run as the first episode in 2000 A.D.



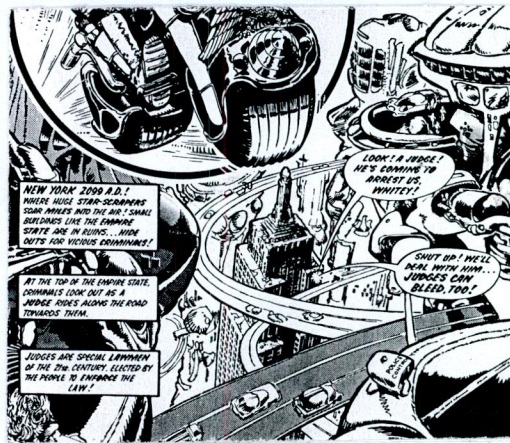
" In fact this first Dredd story to be written was based on the idea about Judge killings which came from the freelance writer Peter Harns." (MacManus, 1994, p.18 )

Mills developed the idea further and came up with an appropriate story. The story gave the background to the Judge system. "It showed they were elected by the citizens to keep up the law and they accomplished this through respect, not brute force." (Landau, 1981, p.2 )

The Judge killers were arrested by Dredd, working on his own, to prevent this respect for the law from being eroded. This type of story articulated Dredd's character and emphasised what he stood for, " He is the Law".

The story also had a strong futuristic element associated with it.

"The Killers were shown holed up in the Empire State Building, which was dwarfed by the miles-high sky skrapers" ( Mills, 1977, p.3 ) (illus.5.)

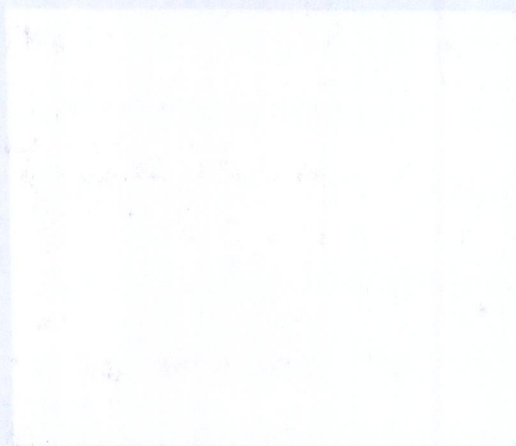


illus.5.

The idea of standing on a road and looking down on the Empire State Building spoke volumes about the scale of the city. It also got the message across that this is the future. So Mills felt the new story had all the elements of a first installment and had the inspired quality that was lacking in his original one. Mills had hired a number of artists to draw Dredd - based on Ezquerra's design and it just happened that a British artist, Mike McMahon had illustrated the Harns/Mills script. So strangely enough, it was unknown artist, Mike McMahon who made a name for himself by illustrating the first Dredd story ever to appear in 2000AD.

"However, to this day, John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra remain the creators principally credited with Judge Dredd's invention." ( Bishop, 1994, p.10 )







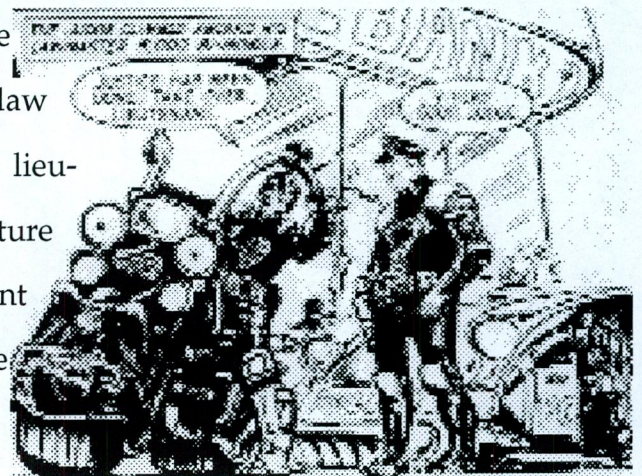
As the story of Dredd developed, several elements quickly disappeared which were present in the first episode. For instance, Dredd had a gun that could fire ricochet bullets and the villains (perps, as they were called in the comic) would call them "Dodgems." This term for ricochet bullets quickly disappeared.

illus.6.>



Also the concluding drawings in episode one show Dredd handing over the villains to a police lieutenant to take them into custody. This image of the police

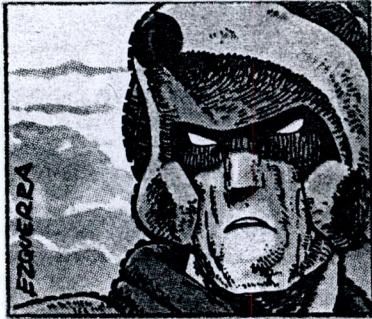
lieutenant also disappeared and the Judge system completely took over as law enforcement. Mills thought a police lieutenant didn't seem to fit into the future and, as a result, the police lieutenant image was never seen in a single episode from then on. illus.7.>



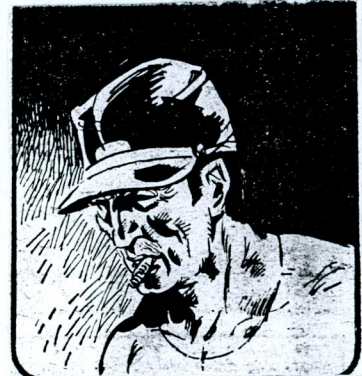
So Judge Dredd first appeared in prog 2 of the weekly comic 2000A.D. He shared his comic home with other strong and distinctive characters which had some of the same futuristic qualities as himself. There was Tharg, an alien immortal from the planet Beatlejuice who had an eerie presence and appeared as the fiction editor of the comic. Robo - Hunter (Sam Slade), who was a crack Robot Detective of the early 21st century. Dan Dare also appeared in some of the early 2000A.D. issues, but gradually faded out as time went by and new fresh characters joined Dredd in the comic. Strontium Dog, a mutant bounty hunter



hunter from the 23rd Century and Rogue Trooper, a genitically created soldier from the future. (illus.8 - 12)



illus.10. Stontium Dog



illus.11. Robo Hunter



illus.8. Tharg



illus.9. Rogue Trooper



illus.12. Dan Dare

With so many strong characters appearing in the comic, who had such startling presences and strong role model qualities, combined with the powerful writing skills of the authors and artists, it wasn't surprising that 2000 A.D. quickly became the No 1 comic in Britain. I feel that the presence of Dredd gave the comic that extra appeal which pushed it to the No 1 spot. Still, the combination of all these characters, dominated by Dredd, with adventure, fantasy and action created a comic that changed the face of comics in the '70s and added a new freshness to the British adventure strip.







## The Early Development

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Since Judge Dredd's first appearance in 2000 A.D. his character started to develop rapidly and within the first 100 episodes Dredd went from strength to strength. He fired readers' imaginations and his popularity grew as successive episodes revealed new aspects of crime and punishment in Mega City.

Due to the extremely talented authors and artist who portrayed him, the storylines of Judge Dredd became more interesting as they went along. Mills and Wagner created bizarre storylines where strange crimes took place, crimes for Judge Dredd to investigate. The writers were able to play around freely with the storylines of Judge Dredd because of their flexibility. This flexibility stemmed from the desire of the writers to create characters which appealed to a wider audience than the school boy readership that was typical of comics in the '70s. This allowed the character to develop over time which prevented them becoming stale and boring, which was the normal fate for typical comic character in those days. Anything could happen in Dredd's future. So the writers used this flexibility to their benefit with way out stories where Dredd had to investigate crimes such as a futuristic version of body snatching, where dead peoples' spare parts were stolen and sold to the elderly rich. The writers also played around with the past and the present, emphasising the futuristic aspect of Dredd's world. In one story, Dredd arrests a car dealer who was selling 20th century cars which were stolen and sold to antique collectors. Also, like the device of the Empire State Building being dwarfed, the artist did the same in another story with the Statue of Liberty. It showed the Statue of Judgement dwarfing the famous Lady with the Lamp. All these little elements in the Dredd storyline made interesting reading and made the image of the future convincing.



At first, Dredd appeared in short stories, stories that would only continue on to the next issue. Dredd and 2000A.D. became popular, but the comic wasn't in the number 1 position. So John Wagner had this idea of producing a story that continued on for weeks on end, for about 9 or 10 issues. The intention was that the reader would get interested in the story and would buy the following week's issue to find out what happened next and would also buy the following 9 or 10 issues to know how the story developed and finished. This would lead to a wider readership by holding onto its audience, getting into the habit of buying the comic. So Wagner produced a nine part-series called "Robot Wars." The story told how a Robot civilisation revolted against its human masters and the only ones to stop them were the Judges; with the help of Judge Dredd, they won. This story showed that Judge Dredd wasn't just tough but was also a cop with a high intellect. Wagner's idea of the epic storyline had worked because the success of "Robot Wars" drew in more readers and brought 2000 A.D. to the number. 1 position in comics and made Judge Dredd as the number. 1 character. Having capturing their comic audience's attention, the writers decided it would be safe to switch back to the one-off installments. The writers decided to build on their success, filling in more background detail for Dredd and the Judges. Every week readers started to know more and more about Judge Dredd. Week after week, elements of Judge Dredd's life were being exposed, while the readers still, wanted to know more and more.

In issue 27, Wagner introduced the background to the Judicial system. Potential Judges entered the Academy of Law - the school where the cadet Judges receive their training - at the age of five. They then endured 15 years of intensive training, where they would be educated in every aspect of being a Judge. After graduating from the Academy, they would be awarded the white helmet and half eagle. At this stage they would be known as "rookie" Judges. To qualify as a full judge each rookie would be tested under "Combat Conditions", which meant they would be actually patrolling the streets under strict supervision from a senior Judge, whose word on the rookie's performance could make or break him.



If he satisfied the senior Judge, the rookie would be awarded the black helmet and the whole eagle, becoming a full Judge.

Immediately after giving the readers an introduction into the Judge world, Wagner followed it up in flowing style by directing them straight into a story showing Dredd's personal background. The story was called "The Return of Rico." In fact, this story was the first of only a few to touch on Judge Dredd's personal side. "The Return of Rico" appeared in issue 30 of 2000 A.D., and told the story of Dredd's previously unmentioned brother. In brief, the story shows us a journey through his early years in the Academy of Law training alongside his cloned brother Rico Dredd. To distinguish between the two Judges, Dredd and Rico, the story gives Judge Dredd a first name, Joe. (illus.1.) We learn that the clones' DNA structure marked them out as excellent Judge material. In a much later story



illus.1.



illus.2.

Judge. (illus2) But Rico was too smart for his own good and had to foul things up by taking bribes and running a protection racket. Joe soon learns about his brother's illegal antics when he witnesses Rico murdering an innocent citizen. Rico tries to persuade Joe to make it look like an

we learn that they were cloned from Chief Judge Fargo, who was the first chief Judge.

They were clones, two identical people not twins but duplicates. That's how it was with Joe and Rico Dredd, although we learn that Rico was technically a better Judge than Joe and actually helped his brother through the Academy to qualify as a senior



illus.3.







accident , and it is from Joe Dredd's reply that we learn his dedication to the Law. His job comes before family, as he arrests Rico for murder,(illus.3.) and he is sentenced to 20 years on the penal colony of Titan. (illus.4.) The central idea of the story was Rico's vengent return from Titan to Mega City, 20 years later to kill his brother. We find out that Joe Dredd knows he must confront his brother and notice Dredd's doubts of an easy victory. As said before, Rico was technically a better Judge. But when it came to the confrontation, Dredd was faster on the gun, and killed his brother. Seemingly, 20 years on Titan slowed Rico down.



illus.4.

In one conclusive picture, we can see Dredd still has feelings for his brother and carries him out with an ironic statement. (illus.5.)



illus.5.

In retrospect, we learn that Rico and Joe were the same person, yet one grew up to uphold the law, the other to despise it, a tale of good and evil.

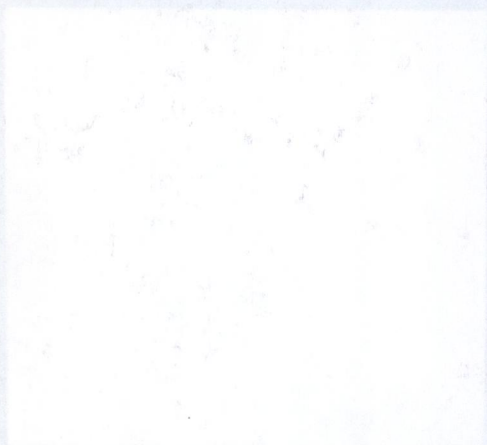
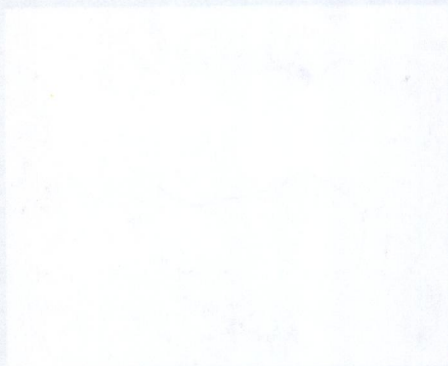
Wagner started to produce more stories and continued to reveal to the readers more about Judge Dredd. For instance, in issue 34 his age was revealed. Dredd was born in 2066 and the story was set in 2099, revealing that Dredd was 33. Wagner also expanded the character's homelife. After the Robot Wars, Dredd



illus.6.

adopted a Robot called Walter who appeared frequently in his stories from then on. The Robot was more of a hindrance than a benefit to Dredd, but his patience, sympathy and friendship to his metal friend gave warmth to Dredd's character. (illus.6.) The introduction





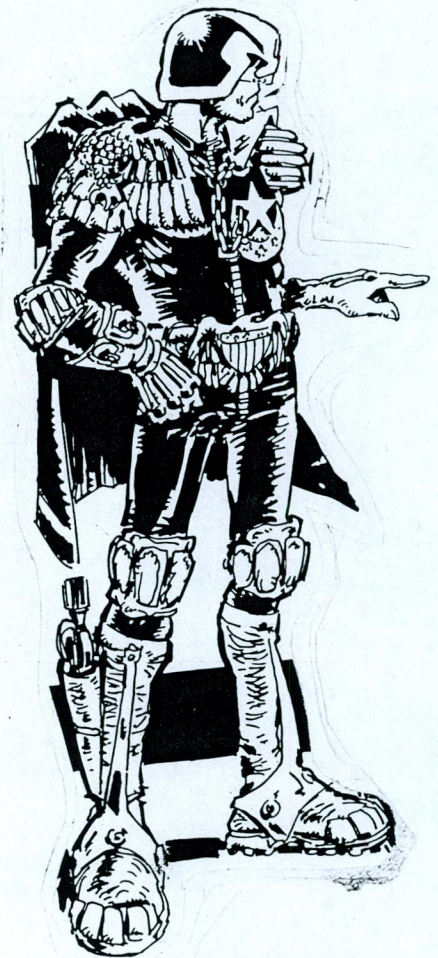


of Dredd's cleaning lady Maria, reminds us of a relationship between Batman and his butler, Albert. The stories were always based in Mega City 1, and up to now, readers were giving no information as to what life was like outside the Mega City. So Wagner decided to move the story to the moon and, with that to expand on the idea that there was more than one city in the USA. This story showed how ownership of the moon was divided between the three great cities of North America, and every 6 months one of the cities would send a new Judge to run the moon's police force. Like the Earth, the moon had territories. The moon was called Luna, and Dredd was one of the Judges appointed to one of the territories, Luna 1. This allowed him to investigate new crimes in a new place. Dredd's rough, tough personality remained the same when he was sent to the moon, however, his appearance changed. His helmet became more round and his chest badge bearing his name was substituted for an elaborate crescent moon and star. He also had an additional feature to his costume, a cloak. The new costume was more appropriate for his time spent on the moon. (illus.7.)

Some of the moon stories show how Dredd deals with crime and lawbreakers in a harsh, devious, sarcastic and unsympathetic manner. In



illus.8.



illus.7.

one story, we see how Dredd deals with crime in a sarcastic manner, as

a suicidal case says he's going to jump from a 30 storey building. Dredd's only concern is not the maniac jumping, but the mess he's going to leave on the street:

"Don't do it citizen! Littering the streets is an offence!" After stopping the man from jumping, he sentences him







for being a public nuisance. (illus.8.) And when a female bystander disagrees with Dredd's harsh punishment, he fines her 2000, and then a further 4000 credits for attempting to obstruct justice. Judge Dredd has no sympathy whatsoever for any lawbreaker. One story shows how devious Judge Dredd can be, as he tries to bargain with a criminal who is holding an old lady hostage, as shown here. (illus.9.)



illus.9.

Just by observing Dredd in the line of duty, we can see that he loves his job. His grim dedication to the law and philosophy that nobody is above is shown here with such clarity.

Wagner brought Dredd back to Mega City 1 in prog 60 and Pat Mills had a script ready for Judge Dredd which ran for 25 episodes. Mills put a lot of work and effort into this mega epic, as he almost entirely scripted it himself. The epic was called "The Cursed Earth."

"It comprised of 25 episodes and over 150 pages of artwork, which ran in progs 61 - 85 of the IPC science fiction weekly comic 2000 A.D., practically covering most of the year in 1978." (Landau, 1981, p.2)

"The Cursed Earth was a project on a massive scale and allowed Mills to introduce many elements of science fiction which were not present in the comics other stories at the time. Again, Judge Dredd's flexibility enabled the comic to appeal to as wide an audience as possible." (MacManus, 1994, p.19.)



The story concerns Judge Dredd on a vital mission to carry a life saving vaccine across to the plague ridden inhabitants of Mega City 2, where thousands were dying. Due to the story's size, Mills was able to introduce many varied elements. He made sure Dredd encountered as many horrors as possible during his journey: Mutants, Robot Vampires, Dinosaurs, Rats and Zombies. He also filled in some of the history behind the whole saga of Dredd's America of the Future. Mills felt Dredd needed new surroundings, a change of scene, so he placed him in "The Cursed Earth":

"Radioactive hell in America's heartland" (Landau, 1981, p.2 ).



illus.10.

The Cursed Earth lay between two giant Mega Cities, represented by modern day New York and California. (illus.10.)

Mills always felt that Dredd's Mega City was Wagner's scripting territory. So he removed Dredd from his normal scene and also got rid of Walter the Robot, his companion, and introduced his own new companions to join Dredd on his journey. One new companion was a punk biker, Spikes Harvey Rotten, which was based on the anarchist Sex Pistols singer, Johnny Rotten. The other companion was an alien creature called Tweak, inspired from a Peruvian Anteater which Mills spotted in an issue of National Geographic. Mills had so much freedom that he didn't just change Dredd's world and companions, but also the top law enforcer himself. He changed Dredd's character from a relentless, macho city cop, who could only cope with the insanity of Mega City 1 by being tougher and more ruthless than its inhabitants, to a fairer, more compassionate lawman whose treatment of the Cursed Earth mutants was both sympathetic and just. If we take a look into some of the stories in "The Cursed Earth" we see how Dredd's attitude has mellowed slightly and how a more interesting and compassionate side has developed while at the same time making the stories

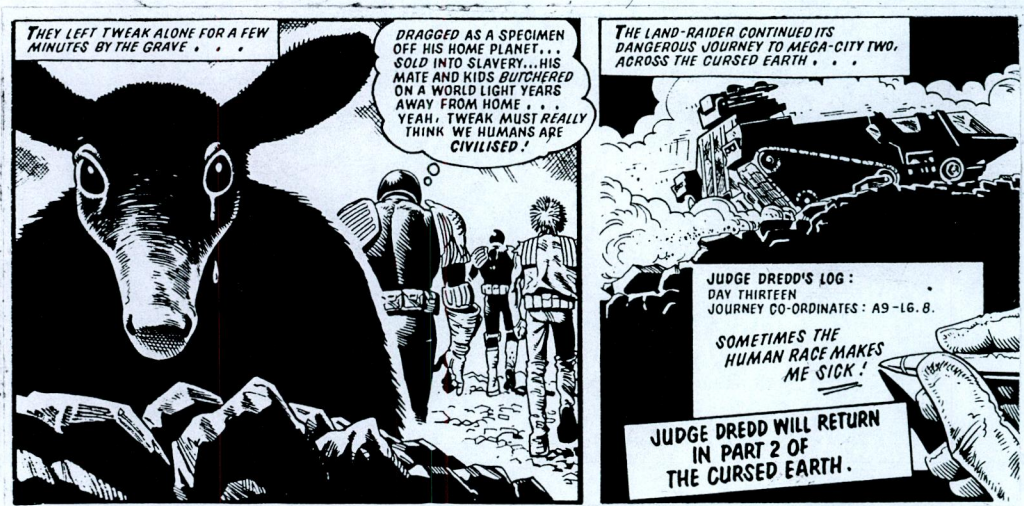


more sophisticated.



illus.11.

We can see some of the changes Dredd goes through during his journey through the Cursed Earth. For instance, in chapter 4, where Dredd confronts the lawgiver of the town of deliverance, we notice an unusual Dredd, where he is pleading, actually begging to the lawgiver, something he would never do in Mega City 1. (illus.11.) In chapter 10 of the story, Dredd is sickened by the way the slave traders of the Mississippi are treating alien slaves, in this case, his new companion Tweak. Judging from Dredd's reaction, we realise, sometimes he is embarrassed to be human, and his diary really sums it up. (illus.12.) We know how sick the human race can be but sometimes it even surprises Judge Dredd as he is sickened by human cruelty to animals, and, in this case, aliens.



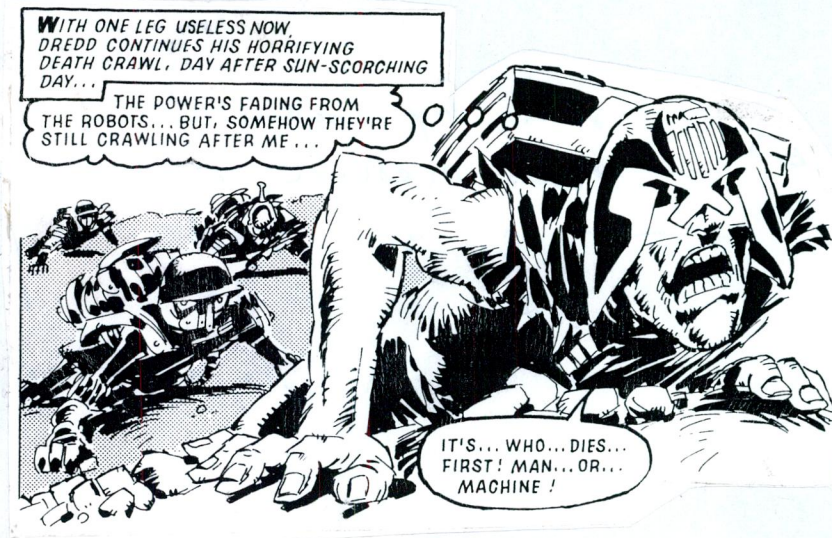
illus.12.







In the conclusive chapter of the Cursed Earth, Dredd is alone in his journey and close to death due to the many horrors he has faced. When he has just about reached Mega City 2 on his hands and knees, we notice his supreme dedication and determination to his duties, as we see here. (illus.13.)



illus.13.

In summary, the rapid early development of Dredd was accomplished by certain techniques; the originality of the script, the use of the epic length feature and the treatment and changes made to Dredd's character. All these techniques created a wider readership and a comic character that went from strength to strength rather than becoming stale and boring.







# Judge Dredd & Mega City 1

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When Judge Dredd entered the '80s, readers already knew a lot about the famous lawman, but they did not have much knowledge about the city in which he lived, Mega City 1. During the early stages of Dredd's development, Mega City 1 was still an unknown quantity. Soon enough, Dredd stories started to show more and more of Mega City 1 and its inhabitants. The writers started to set about defining different types of citizens, and particularly, the supervillan. After a while, Dredd stories showed so much of Mega City1 that sometimes the famous lawman didn't appear in his own strip. Indeed, a newcomer to the comic could be forgiven for wondering why such stories are titled "Judge Dredd" at all, perhaps thinking that "Tales from Mega City 1" would be a more accurate description. Steve MacManus, 2000 A.D. editor at the time, explains the reason for Dredd's occasional absence:

" Mega City 1, the future city where the majority of the stories occur, inspires such good plotlines that they deserve room to unfold. If this means that Dredd occasionally has to take a back seat, then so be it. " ( MacManus, 1986, p.2 ).

However, most of the time Judge Dredd did appear, and when he did, he had a lot to deal with because Mega City 1 was bursting with many problems, crime related-problems. Further insight into Mega City 1 meant a further insight into Judge Dredd. It worked both ways, Mega City 1 fleshed out Dredd's character and vice versa.

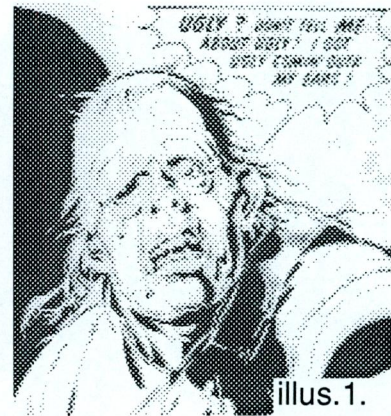
The focus on different types of citizens gave the inhabitants of Mega City 1 personalities and it was this that gave greater scope for the future development of the stories. Some of the early stories show how some of Mega City 1's citizens were defined. The unemployment statistics were high, at a rate of 99%, and with 800 million people living in the city, that's a lot of citizens with nothing to do.



This is the reason for the high crime rate. The combination of high unemployment and overcrowding has led the majority of the population to crime. Each citizen is a potential criminal. A writer for 2000A.D. explains how this problem arose, by giving a fictional historical synopsis.

“ It was 2070 A.D. - the first atomic war was over. Most of America had been devastated and the millions that remained were crowded into vastly over populated Mega Cities. As a result, the crime rate soared and theft, arson and murder became household words. Panic gripped the population.”  
( Landau, 1981, p.2 ).

In one Dredd story, we see a prime example of a citizen who wants to be noticed: Otto Sump, the world's ugliest man. (illus.1.) In this story, Dredd takes a backseat, while Otto Sump is the main protagonist. The story shows how Otto Sump made a fortune by appearing on a TV programme, Sob Story, where contestants beg



for money, ( this just shows the type of weird shows on Mega City TV ). Dredd made his slim appearance by helping Otto make his fortune, but only for the simple reason that it could lead to solving a case Dredd was investigating, a case where a gang of killers had been striking at winners of Sob Story. Eventually, Dredd solved his case and arrested the killers. However, with the striking debut of Otto Sump, the writers decided to extend his appearance in the Dredd story. They produced a story which allowed room for Mega City 1 and its citizens to show their faces, Otto Sump's in particular, and an ugly one at that. This story demonstrated that Dredd didn't always have a leading role in his strip. The idea behind the story was that Otto Sump increased his fortunes by opening up a clinic and selling cosmetics, but these products were not to improve your looks, but to give the citizen an individual recognition by not having good looks. Every citizen in the vast populus of Mega City 1 felt the same as each other, dull, boring, ordinary and instantly forgettable. They wanted to stand out and be somebody. So when Otto came up with the idea of being ugly, he knew he was onto something big. And so an empire was born. The craze swept like wild fire

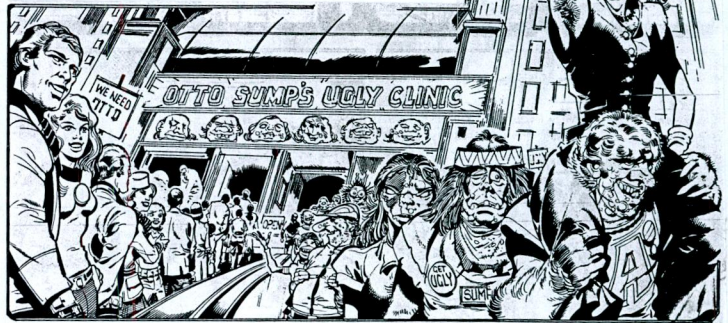






among the city's bored masses - suddenly ugliness was in. (illus.2.) This displayed the mentality of the Mega City 1's citizens; they were complete lunatics.

Another example of how citizens wanted to be noticed was in a story called Citizen Snork. Having already written about fatties



illus.2.

and uglies, the writers thought it seemed perfectly natural for a person with a gigantic nose to attain the same fame.

It tells the story of James Snork, tired of being a bored nobody, who aims to grow the biggest nose in Mega City 1, and soon achieves fame and fortune.(illus.3) Yet it soon leads to disaster as nothing breeds as quickly than jealousy. When a character called the collector tries to chop Snork's nose off, Dredd comes to the rescue and saves Snork's life, but not his nose. It just goes to show what Dredd has to deal with in Mega City 1.



illus.3

The basis for the Otto Sump and Citizen Snork stories probaly arose from the writers cynical view of the American way of life. Some Americans have always been infatuated about their appearance. With the advent of cosmetic surgery this infatuation knew no bounds as americans paid fortunes to achieve that perfect individual look.

Wagner soon created a story that lets readers journey into the depths of Mega City 1, through a night in the life of a Judge on patrol. The story is called "The Graveyard Shift", and documents the Judge's shift from 9pm to 5am. And dur-



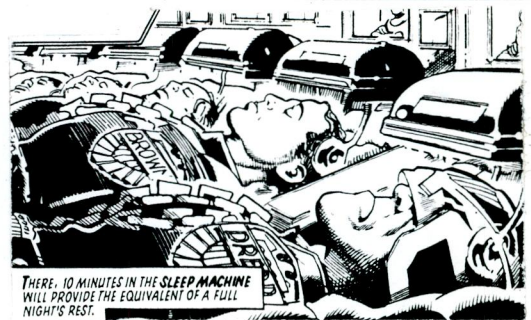




ing this time, as the hours pass by, a vivid picture of Mega City is built up. It also shows how the Judges operate. Wagner and Grant construct a Dredd- Docu - Drama. Although, Dredd does not take the starring role; this is very much occupied by the shift itself. Through this story we see how the Judges love their job. They love to be on the scene of a crime. The Judges do not tolerate criminals who kill fellow Judges; the punishment is instant death (illus.4.). We see the justice department even has control over the weather in Mega City1, and some-



illus.4



illus.5



illus.6.



illus.7

times use it to their advantage to slow down criminals. We find out that loneliness is a big problem in Mega City 1, and nobody cares who commits suicide. We learn that the Judges only have 10 minutes sleep, and then they're back on the street again. (illus.5.)

In a story called "Umpty Candy" there is clear evidence of the



Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter or document fragment. The text is written on a light-colored, rectangular piece of paper.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter or document fragment. The text is written on a light-colored, rectangular piece of paper.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter or document fragment. The text is written on a light-colored, rectangular piece of paper. At the bottom of the page, there is a small, faint stamp that reads "8.2111".



Judge's devious behaviour towards Mega City 1 citizens, and Judge Dredd's lack of remorse over one individual. The story shows how Umpty Candy created the most popular confectionery of the 22nd century, and how he discovered the most wonderful taste the world has ever known. As a result, Mega City 1 was addicted to the sweets. However, they soon created symptoms of crying, hysteria and occasional hallucination. In many ways, it was a drug. So the Judges had to put an end to the craze before it got out of hand. The Judges pretend Umpty Candy was dead, having to lie to the citizens of Mega City 1 to stop the addiction getting out of hand. Meanwhile, one citizen, Umpty Candy himself, had to suffer the consequences, even though he didn't commit any crime. As seen from the images, (illus.6,7.) Dredd seems to have some remorse over Umpty Candy, but that concern soon disappears when he realises the reality of the situation. One life is not worth the disorder it would cause in Mega City 1. It shows how Dredd doesn't let his emotions get the better of him, after all, Dredd's only emotions are towards the law.

However, having said this, Pat Mills wrote a script for an early '80s Dredd issue that introduced an element of humanity into his character. Mills had introduced an old girlfriend of Dredd's into a story called "Blood of Satanus" about a citizen, Rex Peters, who turns into a dinosaur.

"Mills' original script shows Rex Peter's wife, the woman who rings Judge Dredd for help, had featured as an old girlfriend of Dredd's that he'd been going out with before he took his vows. Mills wanted to introduce this element of humanity to counter the machine like and emotionless qualities of his lead character. But when the 2000A.D editorial saw the script, they felt that the relationship tarnished Dredd's image and removed the sequence and explanation, substituting instead some extra dialogue." (Landau, 1984, p.2).



illus.8.







So Mills original script was changed, and it is interesting to spot the stylistic joins. (illus.8)

So we ask ourselves the questions, why is Judge Dredd always perfect?, how is he always right? In 1984, John Wagner found himself being asked these questions, over and over again. So after a comic convention that year , Wagner and his co- writer at the time, Alan Grant, decided to produce a trilogy where Dredd did have to think twice, having doubts about his Judgement, and where he became emotionally involved. This is a Dredd we had not seen since the Cursed Earth saga.

The stories, "A Question of Judgment", "Error of Judgement" and "A Case for Treatment", give us an insight into how the Judges deal with the effects of upholding the law in a stressful city such as Mega City 1. Prolonged contact with its citizens is known to effect even the most hardened Judge - despite the rigorous 15 years training in which he is programmed to administer the law without questioning its rights or wrongs. The trilogy concentrates on one Judge in particular, Dredd. In "A Question of Judgement", Dredd is having doubts about a particular case where he killed a perp (criminal) when he could have wounded him. (illus.9.)



illus. 9.



illus.10.



illus.11.







In "Error of Judgement", his iron mask is clearly slipping when he becomes emotionally involved with a Mega City family. (illus.10.)

In "A Case of Treatment", he shows clear signs of instability and, on the chief Judges orders, he has to undergo an examination to prove he can continue as a Judge. The chief Judge soon realises that the only way Dredd can overcome his problem is not by psycho-surgery, but by his strength of character. (illus.11.) In a later issue, Wagner and Grant introduced a story where a female citizen is infatuated by Dredd. We find out later that she is in love with Dredd, but Dredd's feelings aren't the same for her, but completely the opposite. Dredd can't love



illus.12.

anyone; he can only love the law. Eventually, Dredd arrests the woman for time wasting, which shows he cares about nothing but the law. (illus.12.)

After setting about defining different types of citizens and exploring Mega City, the writers introduced the Supervillain. Up to now, there was an absence of Supervillains in Mega City 1. It needed a Supervillain that would be an individual lawbreaker, whom Judge Dredd would find it hard to contend with, like the way Lex Luther was with Superman and the Joker was with Batman. In many ways, the introduction of a Supervillain into the Dredd strip could enhance Dredd's character, the same way as it did with the other Superheroes. The idea of having a villain that could possibly kill Dredd in a confrontation gives the story a feeling of tension and excitement. One of the first Supervillains to appear in the Dredd story was The Fink. The story in which The Fink appeared was inspired by the phenomenal success of the Judge Child story, with its popular



Angel gang. The Fink was part of this gang of 5 Angels, the only one to survive. The others were killed by Dredd and 2 other Judges. The Fink decided to exact revenge on the Judges. The Fink was one of the nastiest and most unpleasant pieces of work Dredd has ever come up against. In appearance, (illus.13.) the Fink was a frightening looking creature. A small creature with a thin frail frame, who was rotten and decayed to the bone. He bore neanderthal weapons, but carried a deadly poison which could paralyse a person in seconds. The Fink, lurked in the shadows of Mega City alleys and sewers with his rodent friends, the rats. The Fink had a rodent sidekick called Ratty, who stuck to his shoulder like a parrot. They



both wore bowler hats and together they were a lethal combination. The Fink hunted down the Judges responsible for the deaths of the other Angels. Throughout the story, we see how lethal the Fink is. He kills Judge Larter, by getting his rodent friends to eat him alive, paralyses Judge Hershey into a motionless figure, and nearly gets the better of Judge Dredd in a bitter confrontation. But Dredd cleverly manages to paralyse the Fink by using his rodent companion to do it.

illus.13.

It wasn't until 1981 that Dredd had to confront his most scariest foe, Judge Death. Judge Death was an insane survivor of a world he judged to be criminal, a world where he saw that all crime was committed by the living and so the living had to die! After carrying out this judgement on the people of his world, he came to Mega City 1 to do the same. Judge Death was so strong a supervillain for Dredd, he appeared in the story for weeks. It became a serial, one of the finest and most dramatic serials ever written by John Wagner.

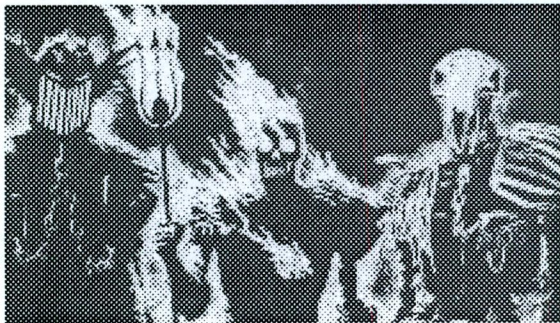


In appearance (illus.14.) Judge Death was a creepy and sinister looking character. He still bore the official Judge uniform, but every emblem and accessory to the suit was cleverly exaggerated symbols resembling death. His shoulderpads bore bones; his Judge crest was converted into a skull; his gold eagle was now in it's skeletal format; and he had a cage visor on his helmet. Everything was decayed, including his skin. I believe Judge Death was a more threatening character than the Fink because the Fink could die, Judge Death couldn't. Nothing could kill Judge Death because he was already dead, a creature beyond the grave. To make



illus.14.

Judge Death even more of a threat to Dredd and Mega City, Wagner introduced 3 more Supervillains. These were Judge Death's brothers; Judge Mortise, Judge Fear, and Judge Fire. (illus.15.) Together they became the 4 Dark Judges, who had cast a sentence on Mega City 1, that sentence was death. The only ones able



illus.15.

to stop them in their rampage were Judge Dredd and a new character, Judge Anderson. Her debut role in the Judge Death series was so strong that you could say she stole the show from Judge Dredd as the hero in the thrilling climax.

We learn that Anderson is with the psychology division of the justice department - Judges who have mind-powers - and is called in on the Judge Death case. Even from her debut entrance, she tries to intimidate Dredd and in one scene we can see strong differences in their characters. Anderson is light hearted, sensitive, doesn't take things too seriously and has a good sense of humour, while

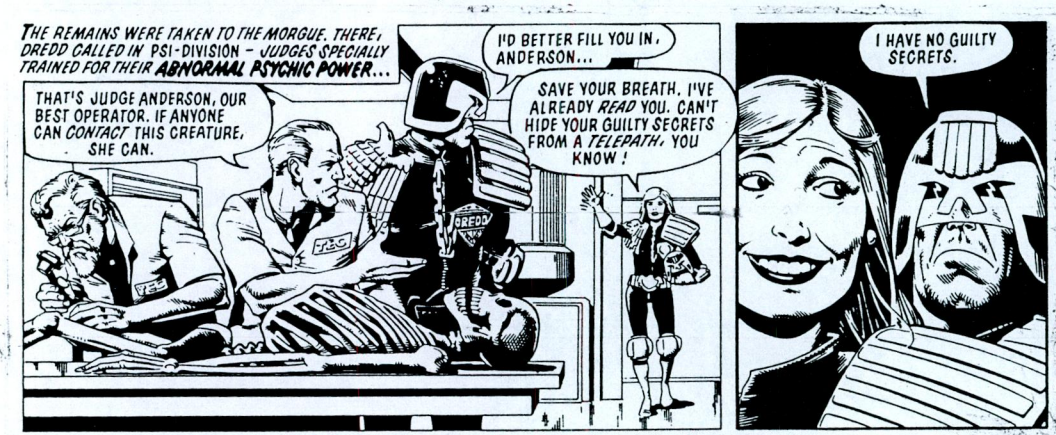






Dredd is completely the opposite, a stone cold face, jokes aren't part of his vocabulary. (illus.16.)

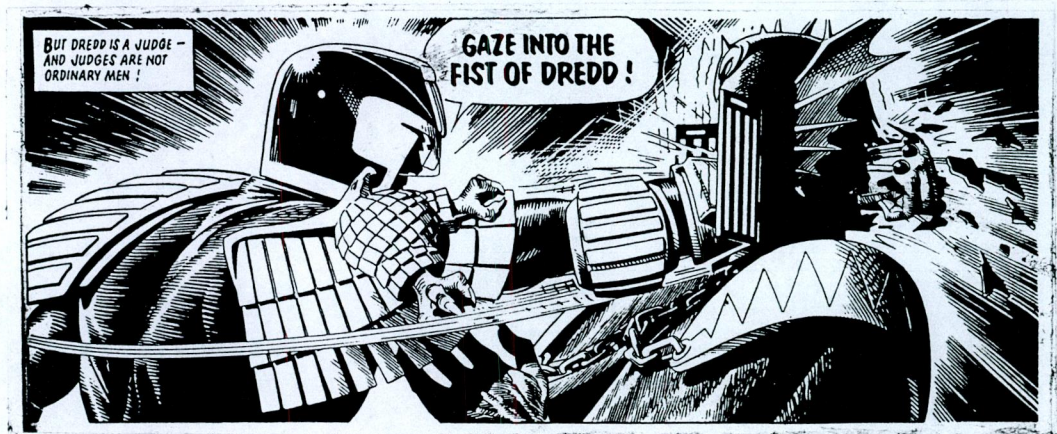
Anderson first appeared in the Judge Death storyline in 1981. I feel that the writers introduced the female character at a time when feminism was growing. Also, she was probably introduced to show that not all Judges were straight-faced and serious like Dredd, she had a sense of humour.



illus.16.

In the first Judge Death episode, she sacrifices herself for the city, by containing Judge Death's evil spirit within her own body. There was a price to pay, she now lies encased in a transparent prison from which neither she nor Judge Death can escape. In a later episode she is set free, but so is Death. He is joined by his demonic brothers to sentence the city and it's up to Dredd and Anderson to stop them.

In one scene, Judge Fear is trying to shock Dredd to death, but we soon learn that Dredd has no fear. (illus.17.)









In the end, Anderson is the real hero, as Dredd leaves it up to her to stop the Dark Judges, and she does so with the help of the tormented souls whom the Dark Judges killed in the past.

In summary, Dredd's character was pushed into further depth due to his futuristic habitat, Mega City 1. In addition, with the introduction of the supervillains and female characters, the foundations on which Dredd's character could be further developed were set.







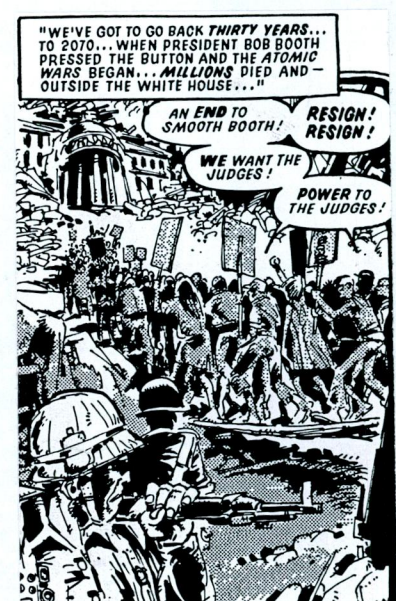
# The Social Concerns

If we were to look closely at the stories of Judge Dredd, we would notice that certain social concerns arise from time to time. When we read these stories, we get enjoyment and satisfaction out of reading them. At the same time we become more aware of certain issues within the comic that we can identify within our own society. The social concerns in the Judge Dredd stories are dealt with in such depth that the message that is put forward can be understood quite clearly. In this chapter, I will analyse four of the main social concerns; Politics, War and Unemployment. I will investigate how Dredd deals with these concerns and point out if they lead to changes in his character.

In the '90s, John Wagner had introduced a flourish of stories which involved strong social concerns, one in particular was with reference to the political situation. Wagner introduced this at a time when politics were in turmoil in certain parts of the world. The Tienanmen Square massacre (1989), riots in Romania (1989), and the fall of Russia (1990). So this led to the political situation in Dredd's world becoming the focus of some stories.

To learn about the political climate up to now we would have to go back to earlier stories.

From "The Cursed Earth" stories we see in one extract, the last President of the United States. We learn how president Bob Booth's leadership came to an end when he was found guilty of war crimes, as he had pressed the button which started a nuclear war, killing millions of people. The survivors' hatred for the President meant the



illus.1.







end of Democracy. (illus.1.) In their hour of need the people turned to the Judges, who put an end to the last President by sentencing him to 100 years suspended animation. And with that, the Judges took over and had total control. It's now 40 years later and the Judges are still in power. (illus.2.)



illus2.

So we were told Democracy didn't work, and the Judges were brought in to keep law and order, taking full control over the whole political system.

Since Judge Dredd's beginning we have seen everything through the Judges' eyes, never through the citizens'. There were no views, opinions or questions to be asked by the citizens. It was a one-sided view, the Judges' view. In many ways, the whole portrayal of Wagner's storyline was one sided. You could say it was a fascist portrayal. Maybe the Judges are fascists, with democracy gone and the Judges having total power, they could well be. To prove if the Judge system is fascist, a comparison will be drawn with the Judicial system and one of the biggest fascist movements of our time, the Nazis.

We know that Nazi Germany was a fascist nation, and I feel their ideals are close to the system that is found in Mega City 1. For example, in Nazi Germany- one of Hitler's ideals was the encouragement of a youth movement, boy scouts trained in at an young age. We could say the same about the Judge system with cadet Judges being trained in at the early age of 5. Hitler wanted the perfect race, a uniformed army, all the same. Likewise , the Judges were the same; they







were cloned, a uniformed law enforcement group. The hatred and fear of the citizens of Mega City 1 towards the Judges is a reminder of the peoples' feelings towards the Nazis. Even in appearance they looked alike. The SS wore black leather uniforms, just like the Judges. The Judicial system and Nazism share the same symbol - the Eagle. (illus.3.)



illus.3.

So are we to believe that Judge Dredd and the system to which he belongs, are fascists? A better definition of the Judicial system can be found by looking at some of the epic stories in Judge Dredd. In a story called "America", we can see the Judges brutality against democratic citizens and their hatred of democracy. For 13 years, the whole portrayal of Wagner's storyline was one sided, it was a one sided view, the Judges' view. But when Wagner created "America" in 1990, everything was seen through the citizens' eyes. This is when we really saw how the Judges operated. "America" was a love story with a strong political message.



illus.4.

The title character was a girl who was named America by her father, who himself didn't like the Judicial system. We see her growing up in the eyes of Benny, her close friend. Through her life we see what the Judges were really like, cruel and brutal. Even from an early age, we can see how America has hopes for her country to be independent again. (illus.4.) She was born with hope and a dream, but in the Judges eyes this would never happen. (illus.5)



illus.5.



It was at this point her hatred for the Judges grew, and soon she would have the blood of 4 Judges on her hands. Fascist elements are reflected in the Judges, as America is brutally attacked at a Democracy march. When she is captured, her hair is shaven and her unborn baby is terminated due to a genetic abnormality, (a compulsory abortion). (illus.6.) This reminds us of what the Nazis' did to the Jews in their quest for a "perfect" race. In the concluding episode, we see the

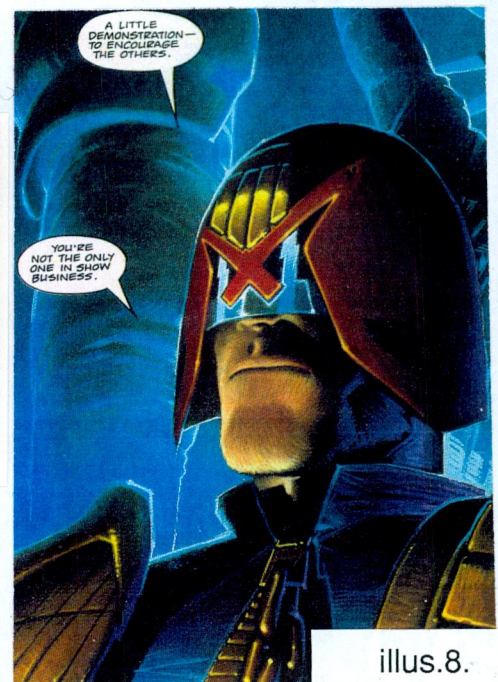


illus.6.

Judges' hatred for democracy, as they have no hesitation in killing the democrats in a bloody and torturous fashion.(illus.7.) In one picture we can see Dredd's inhumane excuse for killing the democrats.(illus.8.) The final image, a close up of Dredd, sums up everything about the Judges' views on democracy. (illus.9) (following page)



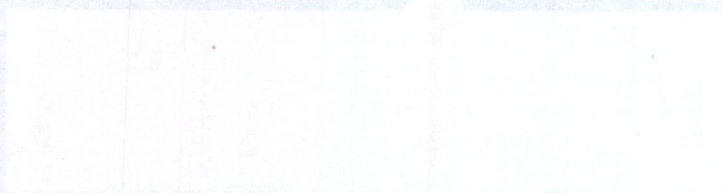
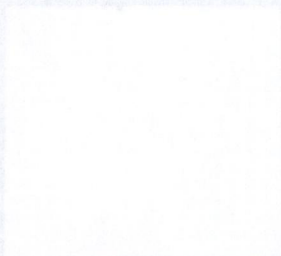
illus.7.



illus.8.

For years and years, the democracy movement was growing and was becoming a thorn in the Judge's side. Wagner, through Dredd, decided to tackle it once and for all in the epic "Democracy Now". This story explores the background to the fall and rise of the democrats and unveils the astonishing lengths to which the Judges have gone in an effort to cling to power. As said before, the people









FREEDOM — POWER TO THE  
PEOPLE — DEMOCRACY... THE  
GREAT AMERICAN DREAM.

DON'T KID YOURSELF.

WE TRIED IT BEFORE. BELIEVE  
ME, IT DOESN'T WORK. YOU  
CAN'T TRUST THE PEOPLE.

SO DREAM ON, CREEP. BUT  
JUST REMEMBER — THAT'S  
ALL IT IS, A DREAM...

AMERICA IS DEAD.

THIS IS THE REAL WORLD.

MACNEIL '90







were appaled by the legacy of democracy - a country ravaged with the grisly results of the nuclear war. Thus, they embraced the new form of government, the rule of the Judges, with open arms. Over time though, many activists weren't happy with the way the Judges were running the system. During their rule, many catastrophes had taken place: an atomic war with the Soviet block (Apocalypse War), 60 million citizens killed by the Dark Judges (Necropolis), and a robot rebellion that created destruction in Mega City (Robot Wars). This was a grim picture of life under the Judges' rule, and as the catastrophes grew, so did the democratic movement. With the pressures of the democrats in the wake of Necropolis, the Judges decided to allow the citizens to choose, either maintain law and order under the power of the Judges or accept the independence of a democratic state. This was a referendum the Judges seemed certain to loose. When the faithful moment came as seen in the powerful image, only about one third of the citizens even bothered to vote, with only 9% voting for democracy. as seen on the following page (illus.10). The democracy movement, thinking that the vote was fixed, decided to march on the grand hall of justice. Dredd confronts the leader of the democrats, Dupre Blondel, and makes the following powerful statement (as seen on the following page). (illus.11.)

This statement, democracy is not for the people, is a very powerful statement. Dredd has seen what democracy has done for the world and knows it causes more problems than it solves.

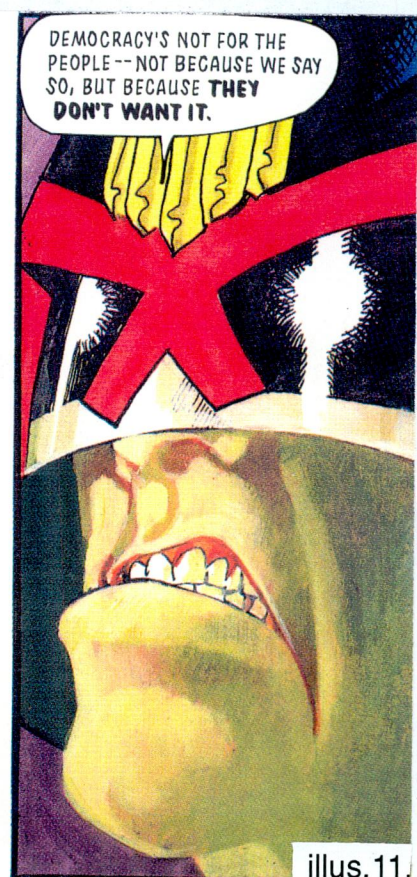
Despite all the similarities to the Nazi regime I would conclude that Dredd's system is different. They are fascists but at least they have given Democracy a fair chance. In addition the chief Judge does not have the dictorial powers Hitler had, senior Judges vote on who is to become chief Judge.

You may ask why Judge Dredd had a change of heart and why did he let the citizens choose between the Judges and democracy? The answer to this lies in a early story called "Letter to Judge Dredd". It tells the story of a boy called Wim





illus.10.



illus.11,





Handwritten scribble or signature in the bottom right corner.



Winders who writes a letter to Judge Dredd, asking him many questions about the Judicial system. Here are some of the questions he asked:

How come when you're so good at keeping our streets free of crime, Mega City 1 still has the worst crime rate going?

My book says that in the old days they used to have things called juries, that 12 ordinary people would sit and listen to all the evidence and only if they thought someone was guilty could he get sent to the cubes. Juries wasted a lot of time and too many guilty people went free, I can see that. But don't you ever worry about making a mistake?

Judges are really well trained and you have got machines to help you as well, but you're only human. You must get it wrong sometimes?

My pal Jojo says you're always telling us you're there for our own good, to protect all our rights and freedoms. But when the citizens actually stand up and ask for their rights you Judges just break their heads. Of course, Jojo's biased. His dad, George Sholley, was on that march a couple of years ago. A Judge hit him over the head and he's still not right. Doc's says its brain damage. He gets fits and attacks Mrs Sholley and Jojo. He thinks tthey're giant pineapples from space come to juice him. I'm not kidding. Jojo says he was just peacefully protesting, but I know Judges wouldn't hit an innocent person for nothing. He must've been doing something wrong that we don't know about, like shouting too hard or something. You were in charge of the Judges at the march, So I guess nobody's in a better position to know - could you let me in on what Mr Sholley did?

The kid would never find out these answers, for two reasons. Firstly, on his way to posting his letter, he was stabbed to death by his pal's father, Mr Sholley, thinking he was a pineapple. Secondly, after reading the deceased kid's letter, Dredd himself wasn't sure he knew the answers.

From this point onwards, the kid's letter would have a massive effect on Judge Dredd. Gradually there would be a dramatic change in Dredd's character. Dredd started to have doubts and the more he read the letter, the more he started to realise how much of a lie the Judicial system was, how everything was covered up. For instance, the democratic march, if the kid had only known what a perversion of justice that was, how corrupt and evil they were against the democrats. (illus.12.) They would do anything to hang onto their precious power. Dredd was in control that day. He was responsible for the violence distributed upon the democrats. He was the one responsible for Mr Sholley's mental condition. So the truth is that he killed that boy just as surely as he had put the knife in George Sholley's hand. Judge Dredd became aware that he was in the



same situation that Judge Minty was years before. When Dredd was a young Judge he worked on a case with Judge Minty and remembered old Minty's words. Minty eventually had to take the long walk into the Cursed Earth. Now Dredd believed that he was in the same predicament and maybe he ought to quit, take himself and his doubts off into the Cursed Earthleaving the city to the new young Judges who still had faith in the system. (illus.13)



illus.12.



illus.13.

Dredd had now felt that it was his time to take the long walk, a lifetime of certainty blown away by a letter. This letter is used to let us see into Dredd's mind showing his other side in full perspective. It showed Dredd in a new light, where Dredd found his humanity, a touch of compassion for the citizens. After taking the long walk, many months passed until Dredd eventually found himself again and knew he had to believe. He knew that the system wasn't perfect but it was the only system that would work and so it was time to come back to where he belonged, Mega-City 1.

The city was where his destiny lay. He knew that as soon as he hit the streets again it would hit him like a charge of electricity. This was where he belonged and could do what he does best, defending the law.



As I already mentioned, Unemployment and War were other Social Concerns touched upon in Dredd's world.

### **Unemployment:**

Unemployment in Mega City 1 is approximately 99% and increasing. Robots do most of the work because they are efficient and cheap to buy. Dredd has often said " There are over 800million citizens in Mega City 1 and each one a potential criminal. " We know from our own society that high unemployment in a particular area leads to a high level of crime in that area. Given the scale of Mega City 1's unemployment problem, the Judges have a lot to deal with.

### **War:**

In the early '80s the Cold War was still going on between the United States and the Soviet Union. At this time, classic quotes such as president Reagans, "Russia was an evil empire" were to be heard. In this environment the writers of Dredd felt that this tension should be reflected in a Dredd story. They achieved this in the epic "Apocalypse War". The story shows the future Soviet Block attacking Mega City 1 with missiles. The Judges of Mega City 1 were startled by their attack because as far as they were concerned, it was a War nobody could win.

The twist of the story was that the soviets had a shield which could absorb Mega City 1's retaliation. Like Mega City 1, the soviet cities were also ruled by Judges. However, the Soviet Judicial system was more of a dictatorship. To make a long story short, Dredd leads a crack team of Judges on a mission to destroy East Meg 1 -the capital city of the Soviet Block. He succeeds and saves his own city. Throughout the whole story the Soviets are seen as the aggressors.

Some of the ideas above sound familiar? Well, at the time the story was written, president Reagan was trying to finance the "Star Wars" project. This involved creating shields which would protect the United States from a Soviet nuclear attack. In addition, the Soviets at this time were seen as the aggressors, they had just invaded Afghanistan.







In my view, the writers through this story had succeeded in showing us that War will always be with us. It also demonstrates the stupidity of man, they had just survived a nuclear holocaust and now one side was willing to doom all mankind just because they thought they could win another nuclear War.



## Judge Dredd vs. Comic Hero

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In this chapter I will briefly discuss on how joining up with other familiar comic characters, such as Batman and Strontium Dog, have benefited or hindered Dredd's image.

Over the years we have seen how Dredd has encountered super villains such as Judge Death and the Fink and have seen how exciting and successful the idea of hero versus villain has been. However, it wasn't until the late '80s that the writers introduced the idea of hero versus hero, where Dredd encounters somebody with the same status and hero qualities as himself. In 1991 John Wagner brought Dredd and Batman together in a graphic novel called 'Judgement on Gotham'.

The novel shows how Mega-City 1 super-villain Judge Death travels into another dimension with the aid of a special dimension-travelling device. The dimension Death enters is one in which Gotham City exists, Batman's territory. When Batman confronts Judge Death, he takes him on with ease due to his awesome frame and superb fighting skills. Batman impales Death and we notice straight away from Batman's reply that he has a compassionate, concerned character. Batman accidentally fiddles with the dimension device and is transported into a new dimension, that of Mega-City 1, Dredd's territory.

On their first meeting in which Dredd arrests Batman, it seems that Batman is superior to Judge Dredd in both appearance and attitude. In profile Batman seems to have a more powerful dramatic presence than Dredd. The tall sinister gothic stature of Batman seems to have more dominance than Dredd's, with his gun and night-stick. In attitude Dredd seems to be more edgy and impatient







while Batman is calm, steady and cooperative. The presence of the two characters with their repellent personalities creates an amazing tension. (illus. 1.)

illus.1



Subsequently Batman escapes back to Gotham City with the help of Judge Anderson who accompanies him in order to recapture Judge Death. Dredd pursues them and for a short while teams up with Batman to stop Judge Death who has teamed up with one of Batman's arch-rivals, the Scarecrow. At the end of the story despite Batman having saved Dredd's life, Dredd insists on arresting Batman. This shows that Dredd's devotion to Mega-City law is unshakeable to the point of stubbornness. If somebody commits a crime in his city, they must pay for it, no matter who they are. Eventually Anderson convinces him not to arrest Batman which Dredd does begrudgingly. (illus. 2,3.)



illus.2,3

Another crossover, which appeared in 2000A.D. and Judge Dredd the Magazine







simultaneously is called 'Judgement Day'. Dredd teams up with one of 2000A.D.'s most popular hero - Johnny Alpha, a Strontium Dog, i.e. a mutant bounty hunter from Dredd's distant future. (illus. 4)

Alpha's mission is to hunt down a Necromagus (Black Magician) from the future who has destroyed worlds by raising up the dead to kill the living. The name of the villain is Sebat. Sebat plans the same fate for the Earth. When Alpha arrives in Mega-City 1 he bumps into Dredd who in his banal way tries to arrest him for being a mutant - mutants are not allowed in Mega-City 1, they are sent to live in the Cursed Earth. To make a long story short, they eventually team up and defeat Sebat with Alpha saving Dredd's life on a number of occasions.



illus.4

What we learn from the above crossovers is that whenever Dredd teams up with another hero there is always initial conflict between both characters. This initial conflict normally leads the reader to take sides against Dredd because he lacks humanity. This is probably why Dredd is often seen as an anti-hero rather than a straight-forward hero. As the story develops Dredd and the other hero begin to rely on each other as they combine to defeat the villain.

In normal circumstances, saving the world would unite two heroes in friendship. However, any combination which includes Dredd cannot be considered normal. Dredd is essentially a loner who will make the best use of resources available to achieve his goal. He is not in the business of making friends.



# The Drawing of Dredd

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In the last 18 years Judge Dredd has attracted a growing army of fans across the globe. His success is due to the fine writing skills of talented writers like John Wagner, Pat Mills and Alan Grant. However, equally important is the way in which Dredd was visually portrayed. The artwork completes the writer's story. It is vital that there is a strong combination of good writers and good artists in the comic field because as comic artist Steve Ditko explains,

'When you put a good artist and a good writer together and they try really hard to do something good, it's just got to be a good comic book.'  
(Ellison, 1987, video)

The artwork is the visual end of communicating with the audience, which is vital in comics. The artwork of Judge Dredd has varied throughout his 18 years due to the many artists who have worked on him. The reason for this is because the writers didn't want Dredd to be visually constant, they wanted different styles for different Dredd stories, thus different artists. There was an appropriate style to accommodate an appropriate story. Due to Dredd's duration in comics there have been approximately 20 artists who have worked on the character. However, I feel that there have only been two key artists who have brought their own individual style to Dredd's character. These two artists have made Dredd what he is today.

They were Carlos Ezquerra and Mike McMahon. They contributed their imagination and innovative drawing skills to create a definitive Dredd. They have come the closest to visualising a Dredd which reflects his personality - an ultra mean, super tough lawman of the future.



## Carlos Ezquerra

Ezquerra was the artist who created the look of Judge Dredd. He was the one who visualised Judge Dredd from Wagner's initial script., an innovator who turned Dredd from an ordinary near-future tough cop into a fantastic, frightening lawman. Hailing from Zaragosa in Spain, Carlos was one of the few international artists to make it big as a comic artist in Britain. It was his peculiar style and rough approach to drawing that caught the writer's eyes and his imagination. Ezquerra's starting point for creating him was an image of a masked figure from the film Death Race 2000.



illus.1.



He took the bones of a simple mask and developed it into an advanced futuristic helmet that covered most of Dredd's face. (illus.1) Over a short period of time, the artist's style and technique have enhanced Dredd's character immensely.

There is a natural, free flowing approach to his work. (illus. 2) There is no messing about with Ezquerra. He seems to lay pen straight to paper without doing roughs, as if the finished artwork is the rough. He seems to draw straight from the mind, as if he were projecting out of his eyes right onto the paper. Drawing straight from the mind, without the hesitation of working things out, creates a fresh, individual



illus.2







style. This is exactly what Ezquerra conveys in his renderings of Dredd. This treatment of Dredd brought him alive. I notice he does lack an element of strong draughtmanship on occasions, but that's because it's overtaken by his spontaneous style. Ezquerra's rough drawing style coincides with Dredd's rough image. Dredd got the nickname "old stoney face" because of his cold hard personality and his incapability of smiling, and Ezquerra emphasises this through his style of drawing.



Ron Smith's smooth style



Carlos Ezquerra's rough style

illus.3,4

Ezquerra highlights the mean tough qualities of Judge Dredd by exaggerating his uncovered facial features. He deliberately extends his chin and makes his mouth crooked to achieve this effect. His pen rendering is incredible. He experiments with every kind of pen and ink technique an artist can use, using in them unorthodox ways. A lot of artists would use the common technique of blocked ink and cross hatching to create shadow on the facial areas, but Ezquerra escapes from the block ink rendering and executes the area with only line, tiny stubbled fragmented lines creating shadow and yet also achieving a rough texture more than appropriate for Dredd's face. This is a bold and rough execution of line on a tiny scale. Sometimes his pen and ink textures are so unusual that you think he used another medium to achieve this effect, like a sponge or fine hog brush. (illus.3,4)

Ezquerra does not exaggerate Dredd's body to such an extent as his face. He does not give Dredd a muscle bound frame like other super heroes, because his



uniform accessories give him a bigger frame already, like an American footballer, bigger than they actually are. If Ezquerra was to exaggerate his body it would compete with his massive costume and accessories and this would make Dredd look awkward and slow. (illus. 5) He uses block ink where it is needed and contour lines to suggest volume and weight.



illus. 5.

The comic 2000 A.D. allowed Ezquerra to have freedom when it came to composition and layout. Ezquerra was able to evolve new compositions, change the shape of panels and, most of all, let Judge Dredd glide from one panel to the next with ease.. When experimenting with page format and layout Ezquerra stretches the medium a little bit. It was not like film, where you could only see one picture at a time. It was not like comic strips in which he worked before, where he was limited to certain formats. Here was a big rectangular page where he could do one to ten drawings on the same page and could compose the page anyway he wanted to. Ezquerra could now control the reader's eyes, making us read what he wanted us to read, then make us stop when he wanted by composing the pictures a certain way.

Take the first Dredd story Ezquerra drafted. He would place Dredd in a square frame panel when there is a build up to the action and suddenly explode him out of the frame when the action occurs. This type of layout builds up excitement and creates a catharsis for the readers. The whole idea of the frame is to control Dredd, the calmness before the storm. When that frame is broken (law-breaking), a great storm explodes (Dredd disperses his villain). (illus.6)









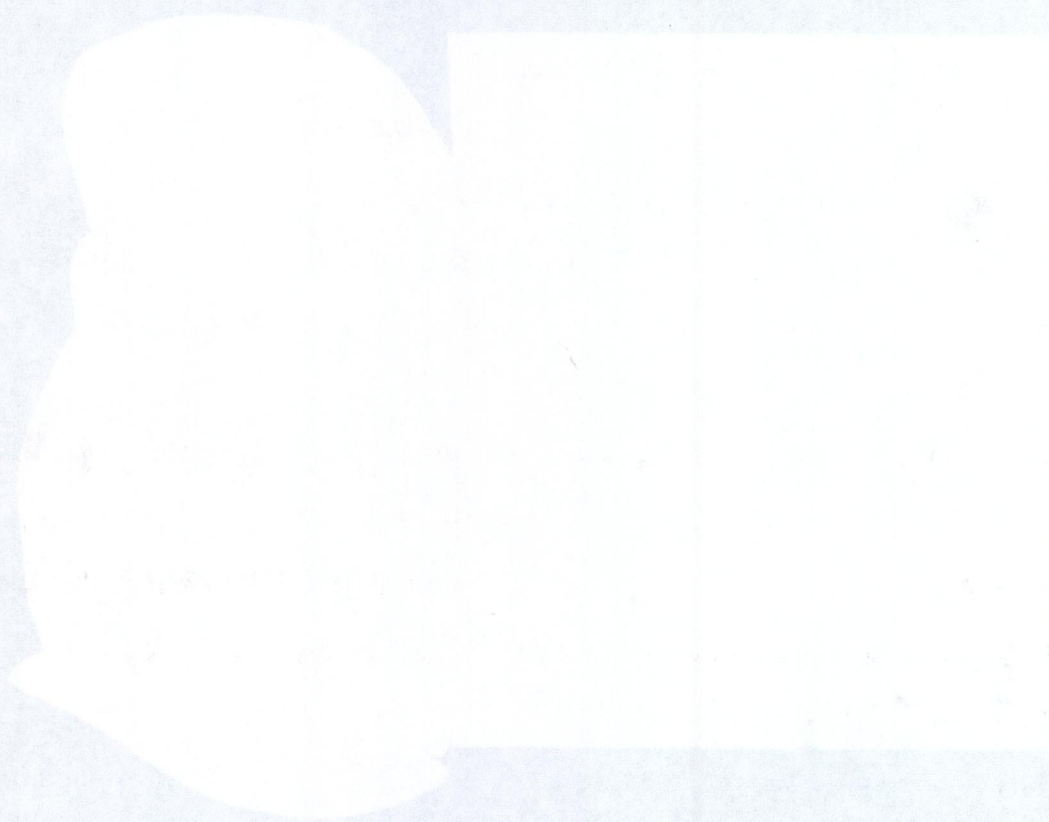
illus.6

The idea of the rectangular frame attached to a circular one expresses that the villain is trapped



and that there is no escape from Judge Dredd. It also guides the reader through the journey of the gunshot and the circle reflects the shape of the bullet making impact. Ezquerra's use of the feathering ink technique is more than appropriate here to express the impact of the shot. (illus.7)







In 1983, Carlos Ezquerra stopped drawing Judge Dredd, staying on to visualise Strontium Dog for 2000 A.D. However, as the years followed on, technology started to advance and so did the comics.

"The biggest event of 2000 A.D.s 11 years was its move to Litho printing for good with prog 520. Finally, artists were able to present artwork in full colour for reproduction and this meant fully painted covers could become a regular attraction." (Butcher, 1993, Page 11).

Many artists took advantage of this new technology and Carlos Ezquerra was no exception. He started drawing Dredd again in 1990. In 1994, he made use of colour and computer technology to create a new approach to Judge Dredd. He first started to experiment with the computer medium in a story called "The Tenth Planet." In respect to his new treatment I feel it has both benefited and hindered the enhancement of Dredd's character. Firstly, the colours he uses are more vivid and stronger than conventional art work. They appear to be cleaner and more crisp than a watercolour palette. The use of a computerised colour palette creates a more futuristic feel which is just right for Dredd's habitat. The artist's choice of colours is superb; the vibrancy of colour creates a modern electric atmosphere. Although to be honest, I feel that Ezquerra loses most of his familiar unique style, due to the computer technique used afterwards. (illus.8)



illus.8







Also a lack of detail seems to be associated with some pages, especially with where computer colouring has taken over and has hindered Dredd's face, making it soft and flat, not appropriate for Dredd's hard image. However, the smoothing effect does have its good moments, notably on curved shiny surfaces of Dredd's helmet and thighs, giving an appropriate metal and leather effect while still maintaining weight and volume. (illus.9)



illus.9

The computer colouring gives a flattening artificial effect and sometimes there is no clear distinction between the foreground and the background. In some scenes Dredd seems to blend in with the background, losing impact and force of character. (illus.10)



illus.10

Despite the benefits of powerful colours and treatment gained from the computer, every image, now has to be confined in a single panel where no allowances can be made for freedom of composition. Unlike Ezquerra's old artwork, there



are certain limitations to be made when dealing with computer artwork, which did not exist when dealing with pen and ink. It is good to see Ezquerra experimenting and keeping up with the modern age, but I do not see why he has to compromise. It just seems that Carlos Ezquerra's experimentation with computer is unnecessary given the quality of his previous artwork.

### Mike McMahon

Mike McMahon is one of Britain's most influential artists who drew the first Dredd adventure to be published in prog 2 of 2000 A.D., although Carlos Ezquerra created the first look of Dredd. At first McMahon was influenced by Ezquerra's style. Both artists' renderings of Judge Dredd closely resembled each other.

(illus.11,12)



illus.11.

Ezquerra



McMahon

illus.12

Over time though, a style of McMahon's own started to emerge and became unique in its own right. Unlike Ezquerra his later approach to drawing Dredd was completely different. Carlos laid pen to paper straight away, drawing very fast and without hesitation.

"Ezquerra would form a quick fire series of visuals in his minds eye."  
(MacManus, 1985, Page 2)

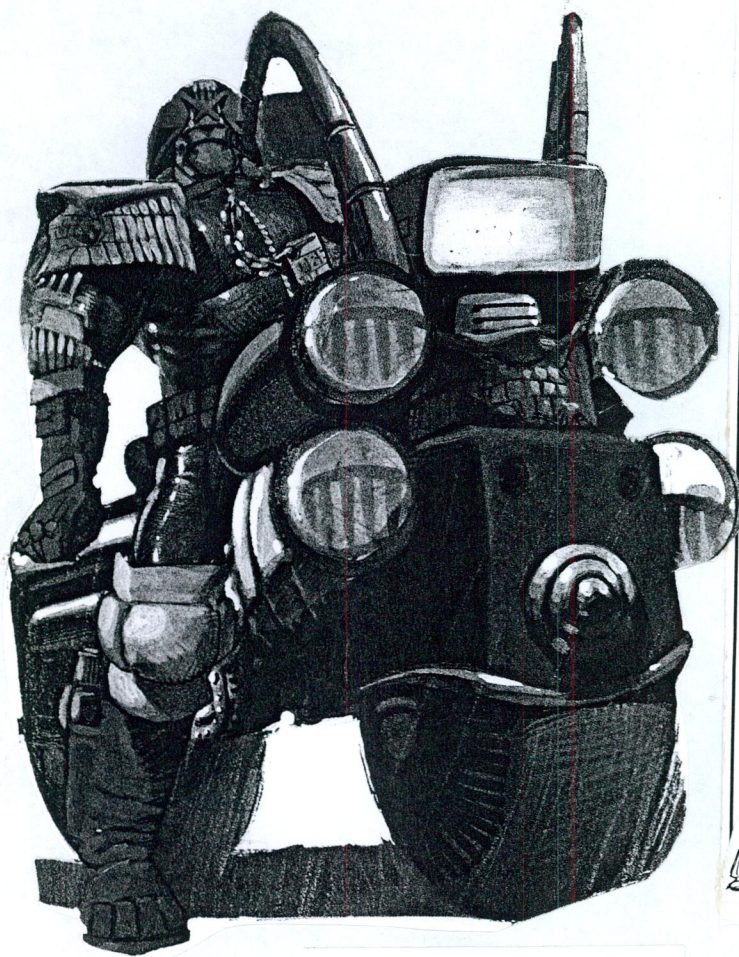
McMahon would be slower in his approach, working out a sketch again and again, until he got it right.

"McMahon slaves over his pencils, often spending days on one panel, occasionally throwing yesterday's work in the bin and starting again and the result is exquisite, precise, and delicate pencil pages."  
(Bolland, 1982, page 2)

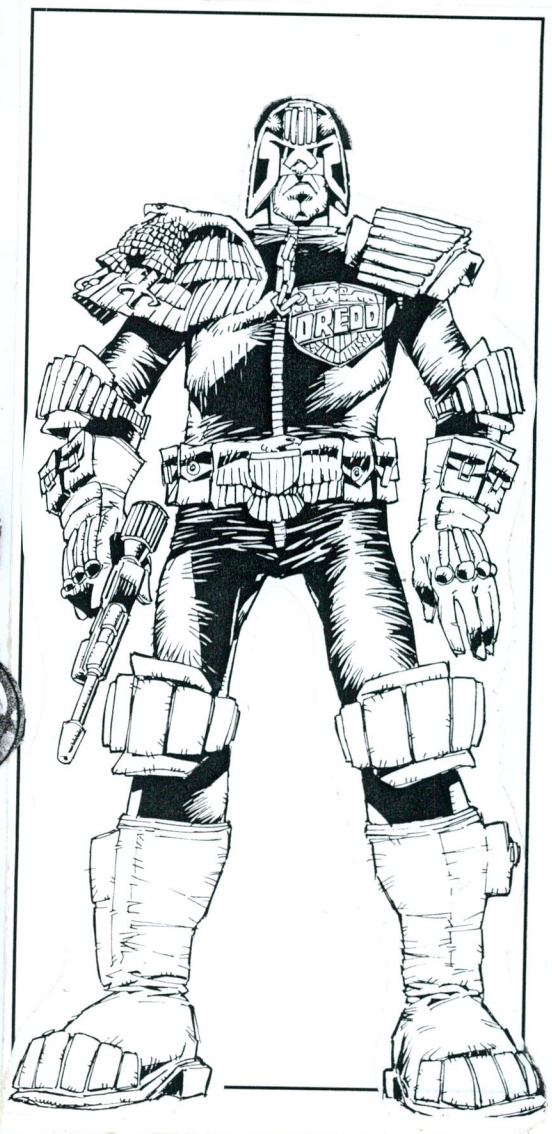








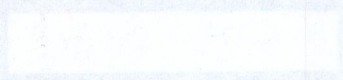
illus.13 Colm McNeil's rendering  
of a musclebound Dredd



McMahon's Dredd illus.14

Due to McMahon's constant reworking of the same drawing, his style does not seem to be as natural as Ezquerra's. His use of line is crisp and definite; his angular style creates a tension in the figure of Dredd, working particularly well on his helmet and face. The absence of roundness gives a formal strictness to Dredd's profile. The execution of his visor with the definite downward angular line gives a sternness to Dredd's stare. The intensity of his stare is highlighted by the solid construction of his chin and a definite approach to his mouth, emphasising Dredd's true qualities quite vividly. Sometimes the use of angled construction can create flatness but with the introduction of the feathering ink technique it forms volume and roundness to Dredd's frame. Like Ezquerra he does not create a muscle bound Dredd. He lets the costume accessories do that for him. McMahon achieves great height and massive weight to Dredd's appear-







ance. McMahon changes the rules of anatomy, sometimes making Dredd's head smaller in scale and increasing the standard size of his feet on a huge scale. (illus.13,14)

Although McMahon himself clarified that Dredd does not have big feet, he has big boots. (Bolland, 1982, p.2)

However, these massive boots emphasised Dredd's superiority and authority. Even though McMahon's experiments in panel layout are not as wild as Ezquerro's, he makes up for that through his methods of inking, making his art work look fresh, alive and unstodgy and allowing the reader to glide through a story with such ease. (illus.15)



illus.15

In 1981, McMahon stopped drawing Dredd and went on to work for mostly US comic companies, D.C. being the most famous. However, 13 years later McMahon came back to Britain to draw the character that made him famous, Judge Dredd, but with a totally new approach.

“ McMahon was not content with repeating himself forever” ( Bishop, 1994, p. 14 )

He returned to draw a four part Dredd adventure called “Howler” for the Judge Dredd Magazine. Just by looking at the work in “Howler,” you can hardly be-







lieve it's McMahon. His style has changed dramatically. Many readers were unhappy with what they saw and this showed in the Magazine reviews:

" Howler looks like its been drawn by a third rate Picasso with a broken arm."

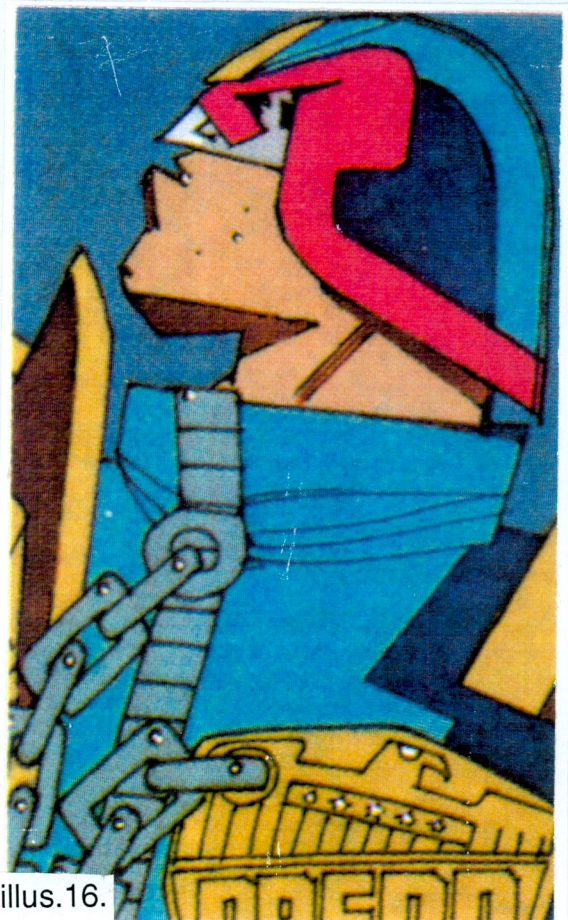
" Either get McMahon to go back to his original style or get rid of him."

I disagree with these remarks about McMahon's work. I feel he has created a new style with originality and imagination and I agree with Judge Dredd Magazine. editor

David Bishop's statement entirely.

" So you'd prefer it if artists never had a chance to grow and evolve! That everyone should find a popular style then repeat it forever and ever until they retire and die? I'm sorry, but it doesn't work like that. Artists and writers grow and change and so does their work. Mike has always looked to grow as his new styles have frequently been well ahead of their time" ( Bishop, 1994, p. 26 )

Examining his work on "Howler", I feel the character of Dredd is being brought to new depths. McMahon has pushed out his angular construction of drawing so far that it is close to abstraction. Yet this abstraction has benefited the character of Dredd and his strip, similar to the cubist style of painting, powerful dynamics and agility develop to the overall story. His colours are not as powerful as Esquerra, but that is because the subtlety of his flatter earth colours is in harmony with the abstraction of the character. (illus.16)



illus.16.







## Collaboration

Both artists' work in the past 18 years has been most powerful when they have directly collaborated with the writers before the script has been done. Close communication between artist and author is vital. When they work out and exchange ideas together they produce a comic strip that tells a story more clearly. In Ezquerra's case the communication with John Wagner and Alan Grant helped him to create great visuals and dramatic scenes. Carlos says he loves working directly with John and Alan because their spare descriptions enable him to read the scripts quickly and form dramatic visuals. He says:

"a good script for me is one with simple scene descriptions like a telegram, and total freedom about visuals. If the script is full of detail descriptions then my output can slow down to as little as one page." (MacManus, 1985, page 2)

One story, "Requiem for a Heavyweight", shows how close collaboration created visuals of a dramatic quality and easy reading due to the writers and artist working directly together.

Due to MacMahon's direct collaboration with Alan Grant before writing the script, they were able to produce "The Fink", where the storytelling was more visual than most Dredd episodies.





McMahon

quora



### Brian Bolland

His polished renderings and supreme draftsmanship have created another fine Dredd. He became renowned for creating the look of Judge Death and the Dark Judges. (illus.17)



illus.17

### Ron Smith

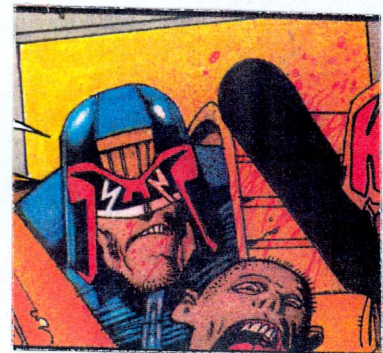
Similar in style to Brian Bolland, Smith is renowned for drawing Dredd in the Daily Star. (illus.18)



illus.18

### Simon Bisley

His art work brought out the extremely violent streak in Dredd's character with his series called "Heavy Metal Dredd." (illus.19)



illus.19







# Conclusion

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So how far has Judge Dredd come since 1977?<sup>2</sup> Dredd has become a phenomenon in his 18 year span so far and I feel he will continue to go from strength to strength for the foreseeable future. It's fascinating to see how Dredd originated in a decade when the punk style was the high point of fashion , and how Dredd and punks influenced each other in their distinctive rebellious look. It's interesting to see the way artist Carlos Ezquerra, created an appearance for Dredd and his world that was so futuristic, that writers Wagner and Mills had to rewrite their script several times to fit in with Ezquerra's advanced drawings. Dredd's character developed rapidly in the late '70s and it articulated his personal background quite vividly through the early stories, especially "The Cursed Earth," Dredd was given a dramatic change in his character, revealing an emotional side we had never seen before.

We can see why Judge Dredd has to be as tough as he is, judging from the lunatics he has to deal with in Mega City 1, from citizens who'll commit suicide to supervillains who commit genocide. It's not suprising Dredd has to wipe his emotions clean away. Even though there are clear similarities between Dredd's Judical system and the Nazi goverment, they are diferent having been spawned from different backgrounds. He is very aggressive and stubborn when he is matched up with other comic characters such as Batman and Strontium Dog. However, without this anti-hero quality, Dredd wouldn't be the complete bastard we have come to identify with. We have seen how great artists and writers have achieved greatness in Dredd. In particular, the creators, Ezquerra and Wagner have combined to produce some of the most memorable images in Dredd's world. It is a sign of faith that the creators have had in Dredd that they







have maintained a strong association with him to the current day. If you were to pick up the latest addition of 2000A.D. there is a good chance that Ezquerra would be doing the art and Wagner the storyline.

So what does the future hold for Judge Dredd?

Up to about five years ago Judge Dredd was Britain's most popular comic character but in America he was not so well known. With the success of the graphic novel "Judgement in Gotham," which was co-produced by DC comics and Fleetway editions, Dredd became an overnight success in the huge American comic market.

This led to Dredd's own comic in America ( produced by DC ) and also paved the way for a feature film. This feature film, which is to be released in the summer of '95 stars Sylvester Stallone as the great man and there are high hopes that it will out perform the Batman feature film. (Murphy, 1994,p.67) It is ironic that Stallone is starring as Dredd, since it was one of his films, Death Race 2000, which inspired Carlos Ezquerra to visualise Dredd as he did.

With Judge Dredd the Megazine, we have been introduced to parts of Dredd's world and to characters that can only help to expand Dredd's character in the future. I for one will continue to enjoy reading both 2000A.D. and the Megazine to witness these developments.







**Sylvester Stallone IS Dredd -  
and you'd better believe it!**





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