

**B Sketchpad Artist: Nathan Evans** 06 Apr

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Nathan Evans is one of the twenty Outhouse artists who have produced a limited edition sketchpad cover for us. Nathan produced a bright and typographic cover for our [A3 112gsm Tracing pad](#). We spoke to Nathan to find out more about him and his work.

**Tell us a bit about the idea behind your sketchbook cover?**

The illustration for my sketchbook cover is from my self-initiated project MF DOOM Typog-RAP-hy. The series was created as a way of showcasing my typography and lettering styles, using lyrics of my favourite Hip-Hop artist MF DOOM. This specific piece for the sketch book reads, "Be Too Nice & People Take You For A Dummy". A lyric which really resonates with me, especially as a freelance illustrator making sure invoices get paid on time!

I have quite an interesting story behind this series of work. I had tickets to one of MF DOOM's gigs and had managed to orchestrate for the music promoter to leave a box of my prints in his dressing room. Just a month before, I had written myself a list of goals and one of them was to 'work with MF DOOM'. To me, this was my chance to have my work in front of the artist and be one step closer to achieving that goal. Unfortunately, DOOM pulled out of the gig at the last minute, so he never saw the box of prints! To create work for MF DOOM remains on my list of goals.

**How did you get involved with Outhouse?**

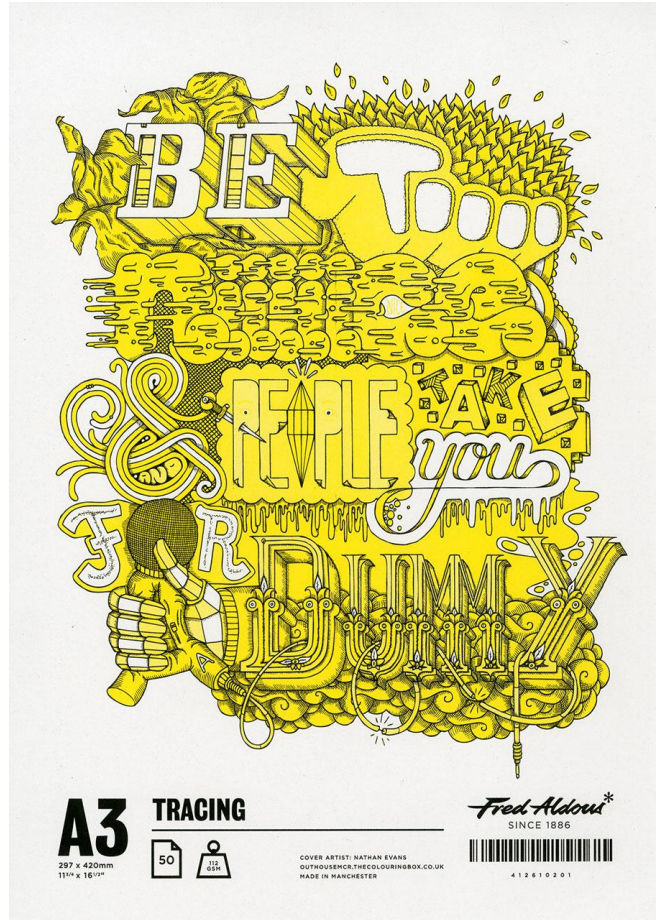
Tasha Whittle of the Outhouse team saw some of my work and got in touch with me about the project. They seemed like good people, the project sounded like good fun and more importantly the walls were an interesting shape. Then when Tasha mentioned I could go on a little stationary shopping spree in Fred Aldous as payment, I was sold! (I'm still using some of those pens in my work to this day...)

**How would you describe your work?**

With my illustration, I specialise in hand-drawn lettering and typography. My work usually references Hip-Hop culture and with over a decade of experience in graffiti and letterform development I have a real love for letters. I focus on precision execution of hand-drawn line work and intricate patterns, supported by vibrant colour palettes.

My mural work is heavily influenced by ancient artwork and the Mayan culture in particular. I developed a series of god-like characters that I called 'Mayan Skull Wizards'. I created my own visual language and narrative with the Mayan Skull Wizards, letting the story unfold on each wall I paint.

More recently I've made a conscious effort to bring more of my typography and lettering into my murals, as a way of building on the continuity between both my illustration and painting. With a background in traditional graffiti, I've always painted letterforms but now I try and make the letters a little more graphical and legible for people outside the graffiti scene.



What

**inspires you?**

For me it's that cliché creative answer. Everything I surround myself with inspires me to some degree. Whether it be a very overt and obvious sense of inspiration, or a more subtle influence into how I go about creating my work.

Hip-Hop is definitely a huge inspiration to me. I never produce an illustration without a Hip-Hop beat playing in the background and it's definitely the soundtrack to my illustration career. On a deeper level, the do it yourself nature of the elements of Hip-Hop has always inspired me and influenced my method of progression and development. Once you learn that you can produce anything you want, it's a pretty liberating feeling.

I've also always found inspiration in film. Thanks to the Wu-Tang Clan, I went through a phase of watching old kung-fu films and even starred in a parody (which is out there somewhere). Following that, I had a slight addiction to 1950's sci-fi and horror. The beautifully basic story-lines, amazing hand-crafted costumes and stylised typographical title screens form a rich gold mine of inspiration. I love a good bit of colour and composition too, so more recently I find inspiration in beautifully cinematic films from Wes Anderson and heavily stylised films from Quentin Tarantino.

On a very general level, success inspires me. Whether that be my own, or seeing others achieve greatness in their fields whilst still staying true to who they are. Most important of all, the journey of my career and in essence the pursuit of my dream inspires me on a daily basis.

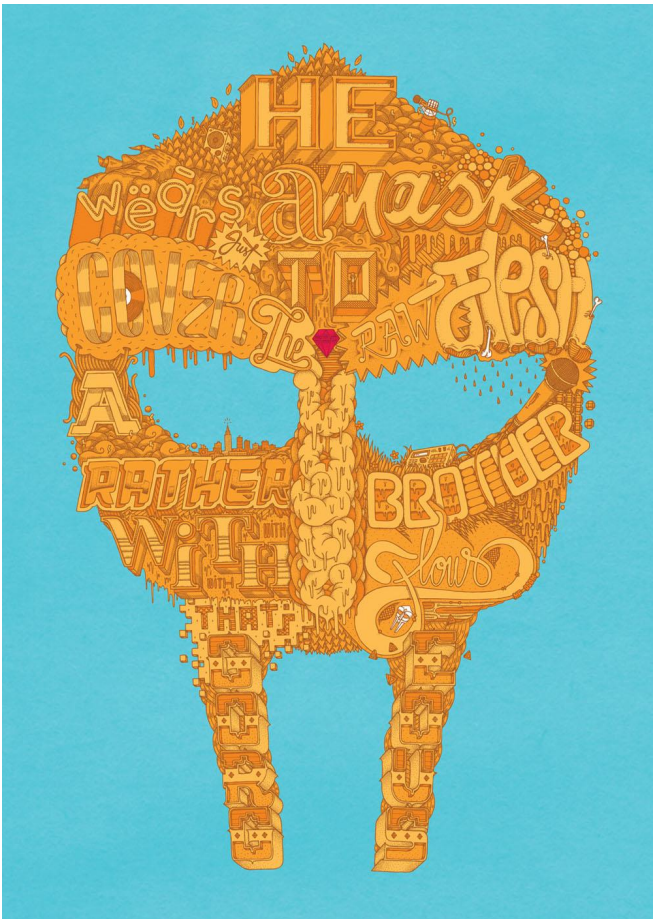
**Who is your favourite artist or maker?**

I don't think I have a single favourite. In the same way that I can't decide on a favourite colour! There's certainly a huge list of artists/illustrators I respect and whose work I love, but I don't think there's one stand out that I worship.

I make a conscious effort not to over indulge on looking at too much illustration. Don't get me wrong, I love looking at new work and seeing what trends are emerging, but I prefer accessing it at a slower tempo. There's so much to see that you can easily end up down a rabbit hole that slows down your own progress. I'd rather be busy developing my own work. Maybe that comes from Hip-Hop and my graffiti background, where the whole idea is wanting to be the best, even if that looks impossible.

**What materials do you use?**

Most of my illustration work at the moment is hand-drawn typography and lettering, so I rely heavily on grid systems for composition and spacing. This means that my trusty steel



uler is definitely key in my work. I always start by loosely sketching up designs with a [Pentel 0.3mm P203 mechanical pencil](#) . Once I've completed the initial pencil sketch of the overall composition, I start the deeply satisfying process of inking the outline. My weapon of choice for adding the outline is a [Sakura Pigma Micron 03 Black 0.35mm](#) (03 or 02 depending on the size of the artwork). When the main inked outline is complete, I then go over the whole thing lightly with a [Windsor & Newton Medium Kneaded Putty Rubber](#) to remove all the rough pencil lines below the ink. I then take a much finer [Sakura Pigma Micron 005 Black 0.2mm](#) and add finer shading details, dots and line work to create more depth.

For murals, I'm a big fan of using recycled emulsion if it's readily available. There's schemes all across the country that collect everyone's unused emulsion, remix it and then sell it at a budget price. One which I've used a lot over the years for my paint is [Seagulls Paint](#) in Leeds, who have an amazing selection of colours. I like using these schemes because you're usually supporting a charitable business and can save a little bit of money too.

I start by priming the wall with my recycled emulsion, using a roller and extension pole if the wall is a big one. Next I mark out the key letters, shapes and figures of my design using a [skinny cap](#) and a can of [Montana 94](#) in a colour that contrasts my background. I've used many different spray paint brands over the years, but I quite like the pastel shades and low pressure of [Montana 94](#). I then fill the different components using either more emulsion or spray paint and a fat cap, depending on what materials I have with me. Finally I add drop shadow and cut back the colours or wrap an outline around the painting, depending on what kind of painting I'm trying to achieve.

**What is your favourite piece of work that you have made?**

Without a shadow of doubt, for my illustration work, it's my MF DOOM Typog-RAP-hy series. I created the initial pieces of my Typog-RAP-hy project back in 2013. A year later, I was selected by a judging panel to show that work at the London Illustration Fair 2014. The pieces were incredibly popular at the fair and people absolutely loved them. This really excited me because I knew my skills had developed so much since making those initial pieces that I could definitely produce something even better! After the London Illustration Fair was over, I jumped straight back into the studio and created this new improved body of work. My actual goal with the project was to produce my best work to date and showcase a selection of my lettering styles to potential clients.

In terms of my mural work, it would definitely have to be my recent 'Hello & Welcome To Leeds' piece I painted at the beginning of 2016. The huge 30 meter hand-painted typography mural was commissioned by Leeds City Council in partnership with Leeds BID and is my largest and most ambitious painting to date. The project taught me so much about project management on a larger scale and has definitely elevated my career. You can see the mural just around the corner from the new Fred Aldous store in Leeds. If you're not in Leeds, you can watch the short film that I commissioned as part of the project. Watch the film [here](#).



**What exhibition or art event have you been to recently that you think is worth shouting about and why?**

I've not been to anything recently, but the last exhibition I saw was Joan Cornella at The Gallery at Munro House in Leeds. His beautifully simple and hilarious comic strips had me in tears in the gallery.

The best exhibition I've ever been to was at the Picasso Museum in Barcelona. The sheer amount of work and the variety of different styles he explored over the years was incredibly inspirational and strangely emotional. I went to a Matisse exhibition at the Tate Modern a while ago too and that had the exact same effect.

One event which I'm really looking forward to and try to visit each year, is Pick Me Up Graphic Arts Festival [<http://pickmeup.somerset-house.org.uk/2016/>]. The festival always showcases some amazing illustration work and you can just feel the creative vibe radiating through Somerset House. I'd love to show some of my illustration work there at some point, that's another goal on my list.

**Do you have any advice for artists starting out?**

I would just say concentrate on your own craft and make the work you enjoy producing. There's so much 'noise' nowadays that it's easy to look at what others are doing and compare yourself and your achievements. You also see a lot of people looking to social media for success and missing the fact that you have to make the work before you shout about it. Don't rely on apps and other people's websites for success. They are fleeting and one silly update (like the recent Instagram notification rubbish) could upset you if you rely on them too heavily. They are just a tool, not the product.

Also, the sooner you realise that the journey towards your goal is just as important as the goal, the better. Ask yourself if this is what you really want to do and if you can say 100% that it is, then no matter what keep going at it. You will be tested.



What tip would you give to people about one of our products?

I wouldn't really have a tip for one product in particular. Instead I would emphasise the importance of experimenting, testing and playing with new materials. The best way to find that perfect tool for the job is to sample as many different products as you can and then stick with the one that works best. I'm still on the hunt to find the perfect rubber that doesn't damage my ink lines at all! The holy grail of erasers...

Where can people see your work? Do you have a website?

Thanks to a very busy start to 2016, people can see my work all over at the minute. I've got murals on walls around the UK and overseas, illustrated magazine covers, album artwork and even prop design and lettering in a crowd funding video for the UK's first ever social enterprise [Art Hostel](#). Which happens to be located opposite the new Fred Aldous store in Leeds.

You can see all of my illustration and mural projects on my website: [www.n-evans.com](http://www.n-evans.com)

Or you can find me posting work in progress on social media:

Instagram: [@ne\\_illustration](#)

Facebook: [NathanEvansIllustration](#)

Twitter: [@ne\\_illustration](#)

Images:

1 Nathan Evans' limited edition sketchpad cover

2 'He wears a mask just to cover the raw flesh, a rather ugly brother with flows that's gorgeous' MF DOOM - 2015

3 'Hello & Welcome To Leeds' 2016, Image credit: Bokehgo

4 'Y'all know who's the best, might as well cut the cheque' MF DOOM - 2015



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