

# THE WORK OF COMIC BOOK LEGEND STEVE DILLON CELEBRATED IN NEW SHOW

\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\*

The Basement

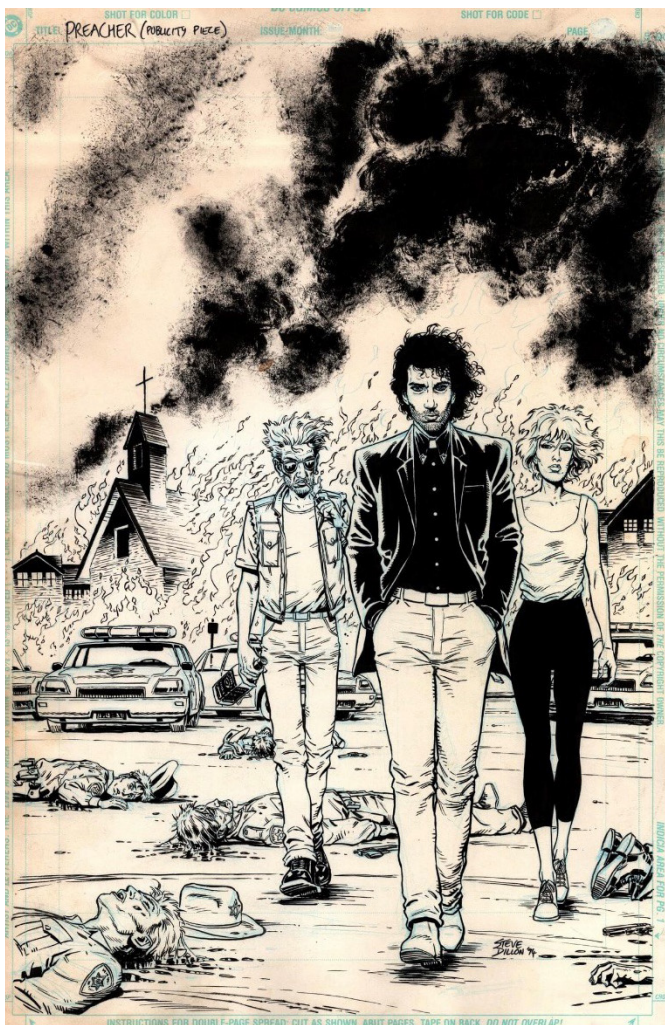
Hat House

32 Guildford St

Luton, LU1 2NR

*Preacher, Punisher and Judge Dredd: The Work of British Comic Book Legend Steve Dillon*

Exhibition dates: 2nd June — 7th July 2022



*Preacher* Publicity Piece by Steve Dillon

The Culture Trust Luton is delighted to present a survey of work by the late comic book artist Steve Dillon, creator of the celebrated *Preacher* series and founder of the magazine *Deadline*. Comprised of more than 50 works, the exhibition follows the development of his work from 1978 to 2016, the year in which he died aged 54 of medical complications in New York.

Entitled *Preacher, Punisher and Judge Dredd: the work of British Comic book legend Steve Dillon*, the show begins with a selection of drawings completed by Dillon during his school years in Luton and goes on to show work he produced for both Marvel and DC comics.

Dillon, who lived and worked in Luton, began his professional career aged 16 when he was hired to draw Nick Fury for Marvel UK's *Hulk Weekly*. He went on to create most popular characters, Abslom Daak for *Doctor Who Weekly* while at Marvel. He worked on the iconic *Judge Dredd* series for the publication *2000 AD*, as well as on DC Comics *Hellblazer*, centering on the character of John Constantine, teaming up with the writer Garth Ennis who became his long-term collaborator. They also created *Preacher* in 1995.

Focusing on a disillusioned Reverend, the strip won Best Continuing Series in 1999 at the Eisner Awards and in 2016 *Preacher* was made into a critically acclaimed TV show starring Dominic Cooper on which Dillon worked as executive producer. In this period, Dillon also returned to Marvel, working on their *Scarlet Witch* and *The Punisher* series for Marvel US.

The exhibition, which is being staged at the Hat House Basement located in Luton's historic Hat District, is a mixture of works in pencil and ink,



Judge Dredd: Cry of the Werewolf Cover (1991), Illustrated by Steve Dillon

some partially or fully coloured and includes many of the emblematic images from Dillon's career. This includes the promotional material of Preacher's central trio (shown above), Reverend Jessie Custer, his ex-girlfriend Tulip and Irish vampire Cassidy. Dillon's intricate linework establishes each character's personality in a single frame, while his inky black clouds rumble in the background near a contrastingly angular church spire, hinting at the controversial religious themes which fuelled the cult status of this apocalyptic-themed comic.

In contrast to the comic artists of the 1980s, who typically were drawing impossibly muscular men and using explosive imagery designed to shock rather than to advance the stories or understanding of the characters on the page, Dillon favoured a more subversive approach.

In his work on the satirical lawman Judge Dredd, Dredd's hypermasculinity passes from superhuman into animalistic, with claws bursting out of his uniform and mouth open in a grimace, showing a row of fangs rather than an all-American smile. Dillon's depiction of heroes as men and women who could be seen in any village pub made his work a refreshing change. His depictions of simple yet vivid facial expressions and physical interactions between his characters helped develop story-lines beloved of readers without ever sacrificing the artistry of the medium.

Dillon grew up in Luton and was known and loved by the community up until his last days. At the launch event his brother, Glyn Dillon, will talk about the impact his brother's work, and untimely death in 2016, had on him, as well as his own career, inspired by his brother, as an award winning comic artist, story boarder, and more recently as a costume designer for the Star Wars films, and The Batman – creating Robert Pattison's new batsuit. Proceeds from this talk will be split between Culture Trust Luton and The Hero Initiative.

Samuel Javid, Creative Director of The Culture Trust Luton says *'This new show brings together some of the most iconic and original imagery from the world of comics and superheros. We have some of Steve's earliest works on show here, including some of his childhood drawings. We're honoured to be working on this show with Steve's family. He has a special place in this town – we have roads called Preacher Close and Cassidy Close, some of his ashes are buried here, and his local pub has a picture of him behind the bar, sticking his middle finger up...'*



Supreme Power: Nighthawk Cover (2006), Illustrated by Steve Dillon

---

For press information, please contact Albany Arts Communications:

Mark Inglefield  
mark@albanyartscommunications.com  
t: +44 (0) 20 78 79 88 95; m: +44 (0) 75 84 19 95 00

Esmee Wright  
esmee@albanyartscommunications.com  
t: +44 (0) 20 78 79 88 95; m: +44 (0) 75 31 99 59 35

---

### Notes to Editors:

#### About Steve Dillon

Steven Dillon (22 March 1962 – 22 October 2016) was born and raised in Luton, the oldest of three siblings. Having started creating his own comics while in high school, he was hired at the age of 16 in 1978 to draw the title story in the first issue of Hulk Weekly for Marvel UK. Throughout the 1980s he worked on the Doctor Who Magazine, creating the character of Abslom Daak, as well as working for 2000 AD and Warrior. He created the comic magazine Deadline with Brett Ewins in 1988, supporting underground comic artists. He worked regularly with writer Garth Ennis on Hellblazer, and together they created Preacher in 1995. He won 'Best Artist Award' at the National Comic Awards in both 1998 and 2002. Dillon passed away 22 October 2016 in New York City as the result of complications of a ruptured appendix.

#### About The Culture Trust Luton

Established in 2008, the Culture Trust, Luton is a vibrant and progressive independent charity and our mission is 'to connect communities through culture'. We do this through our accredited museums, theatres, galleries, creative workspaces and Arts Centre in Luton. Pre-Covid we attracted over 285,000 visits per annum. We animate six sites: The Hat Factory Arts Centre, Luton Library Theatre, Hat House creative workspace, Storefront Gallery, Wardown House Museum & Gallery and Stockwood Gardens & Museum. We present multi-cultural and year-round programme of events, exhibitions, workshops and performances. We support creative talent and skills by providing opportunities, platforms and cultural career progression for young people. We care for a collection of over 2 million artefacts, 1.5 million photographs and maps and hold the most extensive and complete hat and headwear collection in the UK. We co-produce activity with our community, Museum Makers volunteers and team of cultural experts.

The Trust is funded through an annual donation from London Luton Airport and as a National Portfolio, the Trust also receives regular funding from Arts Council England. The Trust also has a special partnership with Luton Borough Council which includes caring for and sharing the town's Museums, collections and heritage venues.

#### About About Hat House Basement

Hat House basement is a new project and exhibition space in the heart of Luton's vibrant Hat District. Curated by the Culture Trust, it hosts new and cutting-edge audio and visual artists, and special one-off exhibition. This rough and ready vaulted brick-basement is a space to dare, take risks, collaborate, and showcase emerging genres and techniques. Until July, the basement will be hosting a special one-off exhibition with work from celebrated British artist, Steve Dillon – known for his characters Preacher, Punisher, and Judge Dredd.

Hat House  
32 Guildford St  
Luton, LU1 2NR  
Thursday and Friday 5-9pm  
Saturday 10am - 2pm

[www.culturetrust.com](http://www.culturetrust.com)



@culturetrustuk



@culturetrustuk



@culturetrustuk

**Luton**

**Luton  
Rising**

