

= Al Williamson =

Alfonso " Al " Williamson ( March 21 , 1931 ? June 12 , 2010 ) was an American cartoonist , comic book artist and illustrator specializing in adventure , Western and science @-@ fiction / fantasy .

Born in New York City , he spent much of his early childhood in Bogotá , Colombia before moving back to the United States at the age of 12 . In his youth , Williamson developed an interest in comic strips , particularly Alex Raymond 's Flash Gordon . He took art classes at Burne Hogarth 's Cartoonists and Illustrators School , there befriending future cartoonists Wally Wood and Roy Krenkel , who introduced him to the work of illustrators who had influenced adventure strips . Before long , he was working professionally in the comics industry . His most notable works include his science @-@ fiction / heroic fantasy art for EC Comics in the 1950s , on titles including Weird Science and Weird Fantasy .

In the 1960s , he gained recognition for continuing Raymond 's illustrative tradition with his work on the Flash Gordon comic @-@ book series , and was a seminal contributor to the Warren Publishing 's black @-@ and @-@ white horror comics magazines Creepy and Eerie . Williamson spent most of the 1970s working on his own credited strip , another Raymond creation , Secret Agent X @-@ 9 . The following decade , he became known for his work adapting Star Wars films to comic books and newspaper strips . From the mid @-@ 1980s to 2003 , he was primarily active as an inker , mainly on Marvel Comics superhero titles starring such characters as Daredevil , Spider @-@ Man , and Spider @-@ Girl .

Williamson is known for his collaborations with a group of artists including Frank Frazetta , Roy Krenkel , Angelo Torres , and George Woodbridge , which was affectionately known as the " Fleagle Gang " . Williamson has been cited as a stylistic influence on a number of younger artists , and encouraged many , helping such newcomers as Bernie Wrightson and Michael Kaluta enter the profession . He has won several industry awards , and six career @-@ retrospective books about him have been published since 1998 . Living in Pennsylvania with his wife Corina , Williamson retired in his seventies .

Williamson was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2000 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and career = = =

Al Williamson was born in Manhattan , New York City , New York , one of two children of Sally and Alfonso Williamson , who was of Scottish descent and a Colombian citizen . The family relocated to Bogotá , Colombia , when Al was two years old . " My father was Colombian and my mother was American , " Williamson said in 1997 . " They met in the States , got married and went down there . I grew up down there so I learned both English and Spanish at the same time . It was comic books that taught me to read both languages . " At age nine , Williamson took an interest in comic strips via the Mexican magazine Paquin , which featured American strips as well as Underwater Empire by Argentine cartoonist Carlos Clemen . Later , Williamson was attracted to Alex Raymond 's Flash Gordon strip after his mother took him to see the Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe movie serial . While living in Bogotá he met future cartoonist Adolfo Buylla , who befriended him and gave him artistic advice . At age 12 , in 1943 , Williamson moved with his mother to San Francisco , California ; they later moved to New York .

In the mid @-@ 1940s Williamson continued to pursue his interest in cartooning and began to take art classes with Tarzan cartoonist Burne Hogarth , and later at Hogarth 's Cartoonists and Illustrators School . There he met future cartoonists Wally Wood and Roy Krenkel . According to Williamson , " Roy broadened my collecting horizons , he became my guide to all the great illustrators ? the artists who directly influenced adventure cartoonists like [ Alex ] Raymond and [ Hal ] Foster . He showed me J.C. Coll , Franklin Booth , Joseph Franke , Dan Smith , Norman Lindsay , Fortunino Matania , and the great Blue Book illustrators like Herbert Morton Stoops and Frank

Hoban . " As he continued to learn about the cartooning field , he would visit the comic @-@ book publisher Fiction House , meeting such artists as George Evans , Bob Lubbers , John Celardo , and Mort Meskin .

Williamson 's first professional work may have been helping Hogarth pencil some Tarzan Sunday pages in 1948 , although Williamson , who had initially believed so , reconsidered in a 1983 interview and recalled that his Tarzan work had come after his first two pieces of comic @-@ book art : providing spot illustrations for the story " The Ugliest Horse in the World " in an unspecified issue of Eastern Color 's seminal series Famous Funnies , and a two @-@ page Boy Scouts story , his first comics narrative , in New Heroic Comics # 51 ( Nov. 1948 ) . ( Williamson is also identified as co @-@ penciler , with Frank Frazetta , of a three @-@ page crime story , " The Last Three Dimes " , in Standard Comics ' Wonder Comics # 20 [ Oct. 1948 ] ) Williamson explained that while Hogarth had offered him Tarzan work , Williamson " just couldn 't do it . ... I couldn 't get it into my little brain that he wanted me to do it exactly the way that he did it , " and instead successfully recommended Celardo , artist of the Tarzan @-@ like feature " Ka 'a'nga " in Fiction House 's Jungle Comics . As Williamson recalled :

... Hogarth got in touch with [ Celardo ] , and the next thing you knew , he was penciling the Sunday page for him . He did it for quite some time and something must have happened ... but at that point I was going to the Hogarth school again in the evenings ... and he asked me again if I would like to give it a try , so I said OK . He gave me a page and he had already laid it out , so I just tightened it up . Then he gave me another page that I tightened up and he inked it . Then I said I 'd like to try laying it out myself and asked if I could do that , and he said , ' Go ahead , Al , ' and handed me the script . So I laid that page out on a sketchpad . He said fine and just made a couple of suggestions as to what I should do ; then I just did it on the big Sunday page , and when I was through , he inked it and the other one I had done the same way , and that was it .

During this period Williamson met his main stylistic influence , Raymond : " I had just turned 18 . I had been in the business about six months or so . He gave me about two hours . "

= = = 1950s = = =

From 1949 to 1951 , Williamson worked on science @-@ fiction and Western stories for publishers such as American Comics Group ( AGC ) , Avon Publications , Fawcett Comics , Standard Comics , and , possibly , Toby Press . He began collaborating with Frank Frazetta , who often inked his work ; and with Roy Krenkel , who often did backgrounds . Examples of his work from that period include " Chief Victorio 's Last Stand " , in Avon 's Chief Victorio 's Apache Massacre ( no number , no month , 1951 ) ; " Death in Deep Space " , in Magazine Enterprises ' Jet # 4 ( no month , 1951 ) ; and " Skull of the Sorcerer " , in ACG 's Forbidden Worlds # 3 ( Dec. 1951 ) , inked by Wally Wood

In 1952 , upon the suggestion of artists Wally Wood and Joe Orlando , Williamson began working for EC Comics , an influential comic book company with a reputation for quality artists . While at EC , Williamson frequently collaborated with fellow artists Frank Frazetta , Roy Krenkel and Angelo Torres , a group which , along with Nick Meglin and George Woodbridge , became affectionately known as the " Fleagle Gang " , named after a notorious criminal gang . Williamson primarily worked on EC 's science fiction comics Weird Science , Weird Fantasy , and Weird Science @-@ Fantasy , illustrating both original stories , primarily by writer Al Feldstein , and adaptations of stories by authors such as Ray Bradbury and Harlan Ellison , but his work occasionally appeared in EC 's horror and crime comics as well .

Williamson worked at EC through 1956 until the cancellation of most of the company 's line . Williamson 's EC art has been lauded for its illustrative flamboyance , evident in such stories as " I , Rocket " , in Weird Fantasy # 20 ( Aug. 1953 ) , co @-@ penciled and co @-@ inked with Frank Frazetta ; and " 50 Girls 50 " , in Weird Science # 20 ( Aug. 1953 ) , co @-@ inked by Williamson and Frazetta . His final published EC story was the 10 @-@ page " A Question of Time " , in Shock Illustrated # 2 ( Feb. 1956 ) with partial inking by Torres , who put his initials on the last page . In the fall of 1956 , writer Larry Ivie introduced Williamson to future comics writers @-@ editor Archie Goodwin , with whom he would become friends and , later , a frequent collaborator . Williamson

eventually helped Goodwin enter the comics field , having him script a Harvey Comics story , " The Hermit " , penciled by Reed Crandall and inked by Williamson .

From 1955 to 1957 , Williamson produced over 400 pages of three @-@ to @-@ five @-@ page stories for Atlas Comics , the 1950s forerunner of Marvel Comics , working in various genres but primarily Westerns . He continued to collaborate with Torres and Krenkel , as well as with Gray Morrow , George Woodbridge and Ralph Mayo . With Mayo , one of the first editors to give Williamson work , at Standard Comics , Williamson collaborated on the jungle girl series Jann of the Jungle # 16 ? 17 ( April and June 1957 ) . Following Mayo 's death , Williamson drew stories solo for the planned # 18 , but the series was abruptly canceled before that issue could be published . His " prolific though somewhat uneven two @-@ year stint at Atlas " , where he first drew war comics , yielded superlative art in such stories as " The City That Time Forgot " , in Marvel Tales # 144 ( March 1956 ) ; " Menace from the Stars " , in Mystery Tales # 44 ( Aug. 1956 ) ; " The Unknown Ones " , in Astonishing # 57 ( Jan. 1957 ) ; " Dreadnaught " , in Navy Tales # 2 ( March 1957 ) ; and " Helpless " , in Battle # 55 ( Nov. 1957 ) . While " something appeared to be missing from a lot of his Atlas work : enthusiasm , " Williamson 's Atlas Westerns , at least , " form a strongly consistent body of work , characterized by minimal to nonexistent action , a preponderance of closeups and reaction shots , and well @-@ defined figures set against sparse backgrounds . "

From 1958 to 1959 Williamson worked for Harvey Comics collaborating with former EC artists Reed Crandall , Torres and Krenkel and inking the pencils of Jack Kirby ( for Race to the Moon # 2 ? 3 and Blast @-@ Off # 1 ) . On inking Kirby , Williamson relates : " I remember going up to Harvey and getting work there . They said , ' We haven 't got any work for you , but we have some stories here that Jack penciled . Do you want to ink them ? ' I 'd never really inked anybody else before , but I said , ' Sure , ' because I looked at the stuff , and thought , I can follow this , it 's all there . I inked it and they liked it , and they gave me three or four stories to do . "

Additionally , Williamson drew stories for Classics Illustrated ( in collaboration with Crandall and Woodbridge ) ; Canaveral Press 's line of Edgar Rice Burroughs books ( inked by Crandall ) ; Westerns for Dell Comics ( including Gunsmoke # 8 ? 12 ) and Charlton Comics , including two complete issues of the Cheyenne Kid , ( # 10 ? 11 ) with Angelo Torres , and science @-@ fiction stories for ACG ( including " The Vortex " , in Forbidden Worlds # 69 ( 1958 ) . He also worked with former EC artist John Severin on the " American Eagle " feature in Prize Comics Western # 109 and 113 ( 1955 ) .

Williamson 's work during this decade was his most prolific in terms of comic book work and has garnered considerable praise for its high quality . He has been noted for his perfectionism and love for the medium . Despite its high reputation , S.C. Ringgenberg felt that Williamson 's artwork from this period could at times be uneven and uninspired . Williamson was single during this period and , according to The Art of Al Williamson , had a bohemian and undisciplined lifestyle .

= = = 1960s = = =

In 1960 , with little work to be found in the comic book field due to a downturn in the industry , he went to work as an assistant to John Prentice on the Alex Raymond @-@ created comic strip Rip Kirby for a three @-@ year period . According to Williamson : " The reason that I was called in to help him out was that John had decided to go to Mexico and Mac [ Al McWilliams ] , John 's prior assistant , didn 't want to go ... The deal was : would I be willing to go to Mexico ? ... and I said ' Si ! ' ... " It proved to be a solid learning period for Williamson , as he credits Prentice with teaching him many fundamental illustration methods . According to Prentice : " ... he was terrific . He 's the best guy I ever had by far . " During that time , Williamson assisted John Cullen Murphy on the Big Ben Bolt boxing strip and Don Sherwood on the strip Dan Flagg . He produced some sample pages for a proposed Sunday strip version of Modesty Blaise .

He returned to comics in 1965 doing one story each in Gold Key Comics ' Ripley 's Believe It or Not # 1 ( June 1965 ) , The Twilight Zone # 12 ( Aug. 1965 ) , and Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery # 11 ( Sept . 1965 ) , and helped launch Warren Publishing 's black @-@ and @-@ white horror @-@ comics magazines Creepy and Eerie with several stories in early issues , while contributing to

Warren 's war comics magazine Blazing Combat . He was instrumental in recruiting other former EC Comics artists as Frazetta , Krenkel , Torres , Crandall , and Evans , as well as artist Gray Morrow and writer @-@ editor Archie Goodwin .

In 1966 , he drew the first issue ( Sept . 1966 ) of a new Flash Gordon comic book series , published by King Features . Williamson 's work received positive reader response , and returned to draw issues # 4 ? 5 ( March and May 1967 ) , as well as the cover of # 3 ( Jan. 1967 ) . Williamson received a National Cartoonist Society Best Comic Book art award for his work on that title . In 1967 , on the strength of a backup feature he had done in the Flash Gordon book , he took over another Alex Raymond creation , the long @-@ running Secret Agent X @-@ 9 comic strip , collaborating with writer Goodwin . At the start of their tenure , the title was changed to Secret Agent Corrigan .

Williamson helped assemble the first major book on Alex Raymond 's Flash Gordon , published by Nostalgia Press in 1967 , and wrote the introduction . In 1969 , Wally Wood 's alternative @-@ press comic book witzend # 1 published Williamson 's " Savage World " , a 1956 story originally drawn for a Buster Crabbe comic book that had been cancelled . With significant contributions by Frazetta , Krenkel , and Torres , the story is a prime sample of the " Fleagle Gang " style and has since been reprinted by Marvel Comics ( in the black @-@ and @-@ white comics magazine Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction # 1 , January 1975 ) , Pacific Comics and Kitchen Sink Press . Wood would later write the script for a three @-@ page story drawn by Williamson , " The Tube " , in another alternative @-@ press comic , publisher Flo Steinberg 's Big Apple Comix ( 1975 ) .

By the end of the decade , Williamson was beginning to encourage younger artists whom he would meet at comic book conventions , helping Bernie Wrightson to enter the comics profession .

== = 1970s == =

Williamson worked on Secret Agent Corrigan through the 1970s until he left the strip in 1980 . The first Corrigan anthology was published in France in 1975 , Le FBI joue et gagne , reprinting Williamson 's first episode on the feature . He returned to Warren Publishing in 1976 and again in 1979 to draw three additional stories in Creepy ( # 83 , 86 , 112 ) . These were published in France in the collection Al Williamson : A la fin de l 'envoi in 1981 .

He drew a few more stories for Gold Key Comics , in Grimm 's Ghost Stories # 5 and 8 ( Aug. 1972 , March 1973 ) , and The Twilight Zone # 51 ( Aug. 1973 ) , as well two mystery stories for DC Comics , in The Witching Hour # 14 ( May 1971 ) , with inker Carlos Garzon , and House of Mystery # 185 ( April 1970 ) , with Michael Kaluta , another artist whom he helped enter the professional field , assisting him . Comics historian Les Daniels noted that " Williamson 's atmospheric technique , which relied on subtle textures as much as hard lines , was not typical of traditional DC art " and that editor Joe Orlando " got complaints from the production department " over using Williamson 'a art . He drew various Flash Gordon illustrations . In the burgeoning fan movement , Williamson became an early subject of comics historians with the publication of Jim Vadeboncoeur 's Al Williamson : His Work in 1971 and the " Al Williamson Collector " by James Van Hise , featured in the fanzine Rocket 's Blast Comicollector in the early 1970s . Samples of his sketches appear in various fanzines of the period . Marvel Comics began regularly reprinting Williamson 's 1950 Atlas Comics Western stories , starting with The Ringo Kid # 1 ( Jan. 1970 ) and Kid Colt , Outlaw # 147 ( June 1970 ) , further introducing Williamson 's early work to a latter @-@ day generation .

== = 1980s == =

After leaving the Secret Agent Corrigan daily strip , he illustrated The Empire Strikes Back for Marvel Comics ' Star Wars movie adaptations with Carlos Garzon , as well as the 50th issue of the monthly Star Wars comic . Williamson was Lucasfilms ' first choice as illustrator for the Star Wars newspaper comic strip , a project Williamson had been offered years earlier but had declined to take on at the time . He was offered the Empire Strikes Back adaptation upon Lucasfilm 's specific request , as George Lucas had an appreciation of Williamson 's EC Comics and Flash Gordon work . Writer Archie Goodwin cited " the comfort of knowing that I would be working with Al Williamson ,

an old friend that I've worked with over the years . He was absolutely the best Star Wars artist you could ever want to have . That makes it easier because you feel that whatever you do as a writer , you have an artist that will make it look great . He 's also an artist that Lucasfilm kind of begged and pleaded for and always wanted to have do Star Wars material . There was that comfort factor in it as well . "

A comic book adaptation of the Dino De Laurentiis ' film , Flash Gordon , written by Bruce Jones and illustrated by Al Williamson , was released by Western Publishing in both hardcover and softcover formats to coincide with the film 's release . A photograph of actor Sam J. Jones , who played Flash Gordon , was pasted into the original cover art . It was serialized in three issues of Whitman 's Flash Gordon comic book , # 31 @-@ 33 , March ? May 1981 . Alden McWilliams inked the backgrounds for the last 25 pages . According to Williamson , " It was the hardest job I ever had to do in my life . " He then began drawing the Star Wars comic strip in February 1981 following Alfredo Alcala 's tenure , with Goodwin writing . He drew the daily and Sunday feature until March 11 , 1984 when the strip was canceled . Williamson 's daily strips on this series were completely reprinted in Russ Cochran 's three @-@ volume slipcase edition in 1991 .

Returning to comic books full @-@ time for the first time since 1959 , Williamson began work for Pacific Comics , collaborating with writer Bruce Jones for the Alien Worlds title ( # 1 , 4 , 8 ) , and " Cliff Hanger " , a six @-@ issue adventure @-@ strip backup feature in the Somerset Holmes miniseries . For Marvel , he illustrated the Blade Runner and Return of the Jedi movie adaptations . The two Archie Goodwin stories he illustrated for Epic Illustrated ( " Relic " in issue # 27 , 1984 ; and " Out of Phase " , in # 34 , 1986 ) have been considered to be some of his finest work , and Williamson himself named " Relic " as one of his best works . He drew a short story for Timespirits # 4 and the full issue of Star Wars # 98 . For DC Comics , he penciled and inked an eight @-@ page story by Elliot S. Maggin for Superman # 400 ( Oct. 1984 ) and he inked Rick Veitch on the classic , oft reprinted Alan Moore Superman / Swamp Thing story " The Jungle Line " in DC Comics Presents # 85 ( Sept . 1985 ) .

Following the expiration of his contract on the Star Wars newspaper strip , Williamson found that the weight of doing both pencil and inks suddenly became stressful to him , drastically reducing his output . As a response to this , in the mid @-@ 1980s Williamson made a successful transition to becoming strictly an inker , beginning at DC Comics inking Curt Swan on Superman # 408 ? 410 and # 412 ? 416 . The longtime Man of Steel artist would later describe Williamson as " his favorite inker " . Williamson then moved to Marvel where he inked such pencillers such as John Romita , Jr . , Gene Colan , John Buscema , Rick Leonardi , Pat Oliffe , Mike Mignola , Lee Weeks , and many others . John Romita , Sr. , Marvel 's art director during that time , considered Williamson to be " one of the best pencillers in the world but he really can 't make a living at penciling because he wants to do these beautifully pencilled pages with ample time to do them . That 's why Al is inking now ... and adding a greater dimension to the penciller he 's working with . " He won nine industry awards for Best Inker between 1988 and 1997 .

== = 1990s == =

Williamson provided the covers and additional artwork for Dark Horse Comics ' 20 @-@ issue Classic Star Wars ( Aug. 1992 ? June 1994 ) , which reprinted his Star Wars daily strips . He later inked the Star Wars : Episode I ? The Phantom Menace and A New Hope film adaptations for the company . Through 2003 , he was active as inker on several Marvel Comics titles , including Daredevil ( # 248 ? 300 ) , Spider @-@ Man 2099 ( # 1 ? 25 ) , and Spider @-@ Girl ( # 1 ? 61 ) , and such non @-@ superhero projects as the four @-@ issue Marvel / Epic Comics miniseries Atomic Age ( Nov. 1990 - Feb. 1991 ) , by writer Frank Lovece and penciler Mike Okamoto , for which Williamson won a 1991 Eisner Award for Best Inker . Daredevil penciler John Romita , Jr. recalled that , " Working with Al Williamson was much like working with my father [ comics artist John Romita , Sr. ] in that I felt that I was protected from mistakes . ... If my art wasn 't correct , then Al would repair it . Oddly enough , Al said he never had to fix anything , claiming he just ' traced ' over my pencils . " In a 1988 interview Williamson indeed stated that " I 'm just tracing [ Romita 's ]

pencils " and claimed that the only changes he made were occasionally leaving out an unnecessary background if he was in a rush .

In 1995 , Marvel released a two @-@ part Flash Gordon miniseries written by Mark Schultz and drawn by Williamson , which was his last major work doing both pencils and inks . Also with Schultz , he illustrated the short story " One Last Job " for Dark Horse Presents # 120 in 1997 . In 1999 , he drew the Flash Gordon character a final time when regular cartoonist Jim Keefe asked for his help on a Flash Gordon Sunday page .

= = = Later life and career = = =

Since 1998 , there have been six career retrospective books published ( see " Further Reading " section ) . Williamson cooperated with their production , with the exception of the books from Pure Imagination . He was interviewed for the 2003 Frank Frazetta documentary Painting with Fire , along with fellow surviving " Fleagle Gang " members Angelo Torres and Nick Meglin . In 2009 , a Williamson illustrated Sub @-@ Mariner story written by Schultz and dedicated to Sub @-@ Mariner creator Bill Everett was published . The story itself was originally drawn ten years previously . Williamson illustrated a " Xenozoic Tales " story written by Schultz that remains unpublished .

Living in Pennsylvania with his wife Corina , Williamson retired in his seventies and died on June 12 , 2010 , in Upstate New York . Some premature reports , based on unsubstantiated Twitter claims , erroneously gave June 13 , 2010 .

= = Legacy = =

Williamson has been a stylistic influence on a number of younger artists such as Tom Yeates , Mark Schultz , Frank Cho , Steve Epting , Tony Harris , Jim Keefe , Dan Parsons , Dave Gibbons and Paul Renaud .

= = Awards = =

1966 National Cartoonists Society Award for Best Comic Book

1966 Alley Award for Best Pencil Work

1967 Alley Award for " Best Feature Story " ( for " Lost Continent of Mongo " from Flash Gordon # 4 )

1969 Nova Award for excellence in illustrative art .

1984 Inkpot Award

2010 Inkwell Awards Joe Sinnott Hall of Fame Award

Harvey Award

1988 Al Williamson , for Daredevil , Marvel Comics

1989 Al Williamson , for Daredevil , Marvel Comics

1990 Al Williamson , for Daredevil , Marvel Comics

1991 Al Williamson , for Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser , Marvel Comics imprint Epic Comics

1993 Al Williamson , for Spider @-@ Man 2099 , Marvel Comics

1994 Al Williamson , for Spider @-@ Man 2099 , Marvel Comics

1995 Al Williamson , for Spider @-@ Man 2099 , Marvel Comics

Eisner Award

1989 Nominee , Best Art Team , for Daredevil , Marvel Comics , with penciler John Romita , Jr .

1991 Winner , Best Inker , for Atomic Age , Marvel Comics imprint Epic Comics

1996 Nominee , Best Penciller / Inker for Flash Gordon Marvel Comics imprint Marvel Select

1997 Winner , Best Inker , for The Amazing Spider @-@ Man and Untold Tales of Spider @-@ Man # 17 ? 18 , Marvel Comics

1998 Nominee , Hall of Fame

1999 Nominee , Hall of Fame

2000 Inductee , Hall of Fame ( Voter 's choice )

Jack Kirby Hall of Fame

Formally named finalist for induction in 1990 , 1991 , and 1992 .