

## Case Study: VJ Shantell Martin brings music to life with Intuos3

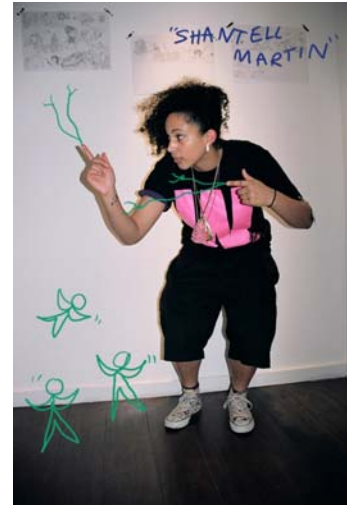
**Country:** Japan

**Field:** VJ (Video Jockey), digital art, drawing

**Product:** Intuos3, Graphire Bluetooth

**Website:** [www.shantellmartin.com](http://www.shantellmartin.com)

*"It's completely spontaneous. Nothing is rehearsed, nothing is practiced. I come down to the club, open Sketchbook Pro, get out my tablet, and wait for the music."*



Tokyo-based British VJ Shantell Martin, with her Intuos3 Grip Pen in hand, is in hot demand as a VJ in Tokyo's club scene. An illustrator by training, Shantell's VJing style is to illustrate the music being played, mesmerizing the crowd with the line art drawn in time to the beat. She originates from London where she received a degree in graphic design at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. Moving to Tokyo in 2004, she began working as an illustrator and soon, the VJing scene found her.

A VJ, or video jockey, is the visual counterpart to a club's DJ, providing clubgoers and the DJ's audience with mesmerizing visual eye candy. They are often prepared video clips that may or may not loop during the performance. What Shantell does is simple, but innovative. As the DJ, band, or singer performs, Shantell draws on her Macbook using Alias Sketchbook Pro. The illustration is projected onto the club's screen or wall, sometimes even the dancers themselves. What makes Shantell's VJing so entertaining for club goers is her style. She is not simply drawing, but reacting to the music, performing live on screen. Her pen dances more than draws. She uses lines jumping up and down, fat strokes and skinny strokes, curves and dots—all on a black screen made possible with her Intuos3 and drawing software.



Then there is her artistic style...rambling, carefree, fantastical, and impermanent. She draws, and is not afraid to erase everything she has drawn as the music changes, shifting themes, shifting subjects, shifting colors. It is an artistic style that is unattached and uninhibited that reflects the club scenes she performs at.

Recently, Shantell has been experimenting with Wacom's wireless tablet, a Graphire Bluetooth (right), modified with a sling so that it will hang on her shoulder like a drum. She is no longer tied to a desk, but moves around on stage performing with bands and singers. Innovation is an artist's bread and butter, and Shantell has certainly found some incredibly innovative uses for her Wacom tablets.



**Wacom:** How did you get started with VJing?

**Shantell:** In December 2006 at Super Deluxe (an event space in Roppongi, Tokyo), I ... was invited down to a party called Miss Apollo and I drew just with paper and pen projected onto a screen. A few people really liked it and asked me if I could do the same thing at their event the following week. Except, their event wasn't at an event space like Super Deluxe, it was at a club. I thought about it and yes, I could do it, but if I draw with paper and pen and it's projected, the screen will be white and too bright for the club.

So I thought about how I could do this and keep the same style, drawing as I do. I had a computer, and thought, ok, I used Wacom tablet back at school in London, so maybe I can draw with that. A day or two before the event, I went out, bought an Intuos3 and got Alias Sketchbook Pro. I tested it out and found out, hey, you can paint and it's really simple. I took it to the club and just experimented, painting in black and erasing in white.



Very simply, I started drawing in the club. The music was minimal techno, so quite a slow beat, and I drew my lines in time with that. And it was really nice because I think it was the first time people had seen this in a club. Usually you have people dancing on the dance floor, but the first time I did this, lots of people stopped and just looked up at the screen. They stopped caring about the music and were just watching my lines. After that lots of people began asking me to play at their events.

In September there is an event held by DJ Mag, top 100 DJs, but also top 20 VJs. This is worldwide, and actually I was voted number 10. This was only seven or eight months after I started doing what I do. And this was quite surprising because number 9 was Cold Cut, and their huge as musicians and visual artists. Since then I still draw and I'm still an illustrator, but since then, very quickly the whole VJing scene found me. It's all very accidental.

**Wacom:** Are you also responsible for the music?

**Shantell:** I see it as collaborative. I don't just draw to DJs, but I draw to singers, bands, musicians, experimental noise music, anything I can. I don't say play this or play that. They play whatever they want, and I react to that. It depends on the space too. If it's a very small space, then maybe my

drawings will be completely different from a big space with people dancing. For example, at Super Deluxe, they have a big space with three projectors, and if people are dancing and waving their arms around, then I can draw little lassos around them, I can draw around people. So it's collaborative, I react to the atmosphere rather than suggest what should be played.

**Wacom:** So it's completely spontaneous?

**Shantell:** It's completely spontaneous. Nothing is rehearsed, nothing is practiced. I come down to the club, open Sketchbook Pro, get out my tablet, and wait for the music.



**Wacom:** Do you have certain themes or subjects that you tend to draw?

**Shantell:** Because I've drawn so many times now, I see recurring themes. But because I do draw from my imagination, and I draw spontaneously, it's not completely conscious. But these themes do pop up, these characters do pop up, or certain shapes or lines do pop up.

When I first started VJing, I'd only use black and white. Paint [the screen] black, and erase producing white lines. In the last few months, I've started to use color. So it's

starting to develop slowly...greens, blues, yellows, oranges, pinks. Also, I have been drawing with a few bands regularly and if I draw with them on a regular basis, maybe I'll use a photograph that I took of me drawing to them and I'll import that to Sketchbook Pro and start to draw on top of that or around that. And that's really nice because if you have the band on stage and a picture of the band on stage but from last time, and then start to work on that, you get a feel of depth even though the drawing is very simple, only lines. I'm starting to build up layers and colors...it's slowly developing.

**Wacom:** Tell us a little about your technique, the process. Take us through step by step.

**Shantell:** For example, a night at Super Deluxe, drawing to a band. I'll start up Sketchbook Pro, plug in my Intuos3. Then I'll enlarge the canvas making it 4000 x 4000 pixels. That's important because I need room to move the painting around. It doesn't go off the screen; it just goes to gray space. Then I'll paint it completely black which is quite important because you don't want a bright white screen in a dark space. Then if I am using colors, I'll go to the color palette and I'll put a little dab of each color at the bottom. Then I'll go to full screen, so no scrollbars. Then I'm ready to rock and roll.



When the music starts, I'll use the eraser and start drawing. If I want to use color, I use the eyedropper tool, select the color and draw with that. But the great thing is that I use the Intuos3's ExpressKeys. I program one button to zoom in, zoom out, and to move around. One button is the eyedropper, another button is to change the pen width. So I've programmed that which is good

because I can sit back from the computer and just look at the projector screen instead of looking at the computer or the Intuos3. I can just press a button to enlarge, to move it around, draw lines, paint bigger, paint smaller. That's good because it's as basic and simple as I need it. If you're in a club, you don't need all these keyboard commands, you just need to keep it basic and simple. I guess that's my technique, to keep it basic and simple. Using the Intuos3, it's perfect for me with those buttons.



**Wacom:** How does the audience react?

**Shantell:** I've never been to a club where someone hasn't come to me at the end and shook my hand and said, "Wow, this is great, I love your stuff. What are you using? Where can I buy that?" I've had people go out and buy the software, buy a Wacom tablet, and go home, try it, and send it to me. And these are people I don't know.

Or, a lot of people come and sit next to me, and I ask, "What's your name?" "Tomo." Ok, so I write Tomo on the screen, and move it around in time to the music, and they are so happy! So it's really interactive like that. You can write people's names, draw certain characters. I seem to have a positive reaction from everyone. Not just young people or old people, but everyone across the scale seems to be interested and see that it's interactive.

**Wacom:** What have other VJs said about what you do?

**Shantell:** It's pretty different, and I get to work with these VJs who come to the club with all these mixers and equipment that I don't know how to use. And they say, Wow, that's a really simple set up. I get a lot of positive comments from the VJs I've met personally.

But, because last year I was voted top 10 worldwide [on DJ Mag], and there was a lot of internet discussion about whether or not I should have been in the VJ top 20 because I'm not a traditional VJ, and I don't use VJ clips. So there was a lot of discussion on the internet about me which I was quite thrilled about. All these really big VJs are talking about me, and I'm in Japan and they're all in Europe and America. That was good, but face to face, VJs that I've met, they've all been really positive.



*All photos courtesy of Shantell Martin.*



###

#### **About Wacom**

Wacom Company Ltd., (Tokyo Stock Exchange 6727), is a global company based in Japan with subsidiaries in the United States (Wacom Technology Corporation), Germany (Wacom Europe GmbH), China (Wacom China Corporation), Korea (Wacom Korea Co., Ltd.), Australia (Wacom Australia Pty, Ltd) and Singapore (Wacom Singapore Pte. Ltd.). In addition to these subsidiaries, Wacom has affiliate offices around the world to support marketing and distribution in over 150 countries. Founded in 1983, Wacom's vision to bring people and technology closer together through natural interface technologies has made it the world's leading manufacturer of pen tablets, interactive pen displays, and digital interface solutions. The advanced technology of Wacom's intuitive input devices has been used to create some of the most exciting digital art, films, special effects, fashion and designs around the world and provides business and home users with their leading interface technology to express their personality. Millions of customers are using its cordless, battery-free, pressure-sensitive pen technology.

Wacom's patented digital interface technology, called Penabled®, is also offered as an integrated solution to strategic partners. Most Tablet PC manufacturers count on the advanced features and reliability of Penabled technology to deliver a superior pen experience. Penabled technology is also playing an essential role in the development of leading-edge mobile devices.

For further information please contact local subsidiaries ([www.wacom-asia.com/contact](http://www.wacom-asia.com/contact)), or Glenn Tsunekawa, Marketing Manager for Asia Pacific at [apress \[at\] wacom.co.jp](mailto:apress@wacom.co.jp)