



Q&A with Jim Paillot

Illustrator of the MY WEIRD SCHOOL series

What do you use to create your pictures? Pen-and-ink? Paint? Sharpie? Computer?
I create the sketches with good ol' pencil and paper, and the final art is done on my Mac.

What software do you use?
Adobe Illustrator

Who created the look of the characters, you or Dan?
When the book idea was first presented to me, the editor and art director at HarperCollins had a few suggestions. Dan may have, too. I don't remember. But the look of the kids comes from my coffee-fueled imagination.

Which character is hardest to draw? Easiest? Most fun?
Hardest: A.J., because I want to make sure he looks like the same kid from book to book.
Easiest: Miss Daisy. Most Fun: Mr. Granite. I love that little alien.

How long does it take you to make the cover?
One day to sketch it and one day to do the final art.

How long does it take you to draw the inside pictures?
About a week for sketches and about ten days for the final art.

What comes first, the words or the pictures?
In a good book they should work together seamlessly. But in a chapter book, nothing beats a good, well-told story.

Does Dan tell you what to draw?
Dan who? Just kidding. He hardly ever does. Sometimes he points out something about the sketches that is or isn't working with the story and I redraw that scene.

Are any of the characters based on real people?
No.



Why does A.J. have weird hair?
That's on purpose. I wanted our hero to really stand out and be immediately recognizable from his pals. I wanted him to have "island hair," or dreads. But it really looks messier than that. I like it. A.J. is too busy to worry about combing his hair anyway. That's the first rule of being a kid.

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How do you decide where to put the pictures?

I try to spread them out evenly in the book up to the end, where there are often a few more to help illustrate the crazy plot Dan has devised.

Did you go to art school?

Yes.

Did you go to a weird school?

Sometimes it seemed pretty weird. People sat around and talked about art all day! How weird is that?

Did you always want to be an artist?

Yes. I remember in kindergarten wanting to be an artist someday. It's all I ever wanted.

Who is your favorite artist ever?

N. C. Wyeth. But I love about a hundred other illustrators. Wyeth painted pirates, cowboys, and lots of adventure stuff. He also taught other famous illustrators. I also like Miro.

Does anybody help you?

My dogs lick my face when I am tired. Otherwise, no.

What do you draw besides My Weird School?

I illustrate other books. I also create artwork for games and magazines. Nickelodeon, McDonald's, Hasbro, and Hallmark Cards are just a few of the folks I am lucky enough to work with.

How did you meet Dan?

I pulled a thorn from his paw, and he promised to protect me for the rest of my life.

How do you guys work together if Dan lives in New Jersey and you live in Arizona?

Email. Also, Dan does not live in New Jersey. He lives on a private island near Barbados. He types his amusing books on a garage-sale typewriter while sitting shirtless on a beach. A trained man size monkey feeds him lunch meat as he counts his money.

Do you live near the Grand Canyon?

It's about a five-hour drive from here. Or a 137-hour drive if I head directly south, cross Antarctica, cut across Canada, and follow the Great Divide.

Do immigration police stop to ask you for your papers every day?

No. The guy at the donut shop does, though.

Who is nuttier, you or Dan?

We are both nutty. Although I also have a creamy, nougat filling.

How much in awe of Dan's genius are you?

I am in awe of his stylish, hillbilly-inspired beard. His genius—not as much.

Is Dan really making up these questions?

No. I can tell his man-size monkey took over about eight questions ago.

Why is Dan pretending that somebody else is interviewing you?

Because it works in Hollywood and he is hoping to turn this interview into another book, movie, Xbox game, and hologram.



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