

## QUICK DRAW

Forensic sketch artist Michael Streed locks up bad guys with his art.

By Erin Tobin

Thanks to television shows like "CSI," most people understand the role DNA evidence plays in convicting criminals. What doesn't often make it to prime time is the importance of a quality composite sketch. "Great DNA evidence is useless if it's not already in the database, but a good sketch will help you find a name," says Michael Streed, a retired sergeant, forensic artist and the co-owner of Corona-based SketchCop Facette, a computer program designed to make it easier to get those successful sketches. When he was a child, Streed had a talent for drawing and aspirations of being a Disney animator. As he got older he decided instead to follow in his father's footsteps and join the police force, but that didn't mean he packed his pencils away. For over 30 years Streed served as both a cop and a forensic artist, and bestowed the moniker "SketchCop" on himself to describe his role in serving the public. "My goal has always been to put crooks in jail, by gun or by pencil," he says. His work helped locate suspects for high profile cases, including the Samantha Runnion kidnapping, the Anthony Martinez slaying and the Baton Rouge Serial Killer. "I love catching bad guys," says Streed. "But after a while you start to think, 'how can we build a better mouse-trap?'"

Streed mentions that most police forces don't have a full time forensic artist and therefore must wait until an officer with drawing ability or a freelance artist is available. Both of those situations waste precious time. To save time, several computer programs were generated to build composite sketches. Unfortunately, Streed, who helped to promote some of the programs, says many of them either only offered a limited number of choices or were "basically drawing with a mouse" and went unused by local law enforcement.

So, still focused on putting the bad guys behind bars, Streed developed his own program. Now used across California, the Windows-based software combines familiar Adobe tools and more than 5,000 facial components. Finished images can be saved electronically and easily e-mailed. What's more, Streed and his company offer to train entire departments on how to use the program, and Streed says he is personally available to address any questions or troubleshooting. "Once the officers experience success, the program will be irreplaceable," Streed says. "The more sketches that go out, the more crooks go to jail, and the more sketches are made. It causes a ripple."

