



GRAPHIC EXCHANGE

Fire

BUILDING INTERACTIVE RICH MEDIA WEB SITES

CANADIAN MAGAZINES: AN INDUSTRY IN DECLINE

10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR MAC AND PC SYSTEMS RUNNING CLEAN

When

IS THERE A MANUFACTURING MODEL FOR COMMERCIAL PRINTING?

PHOTOSHOP TECHNIQUES: TYPE AND BACKGROUND EFFECTS

ADOBE INPRODUCTION 1.0 • MACROMEDIA FREEHAND 9

HOW TO NOT MAKE MONEY — A PRINTER'S TALE

Ready

MAR/APR 2000 \$7.95



0 74470 87183 5



by Bob Connolly

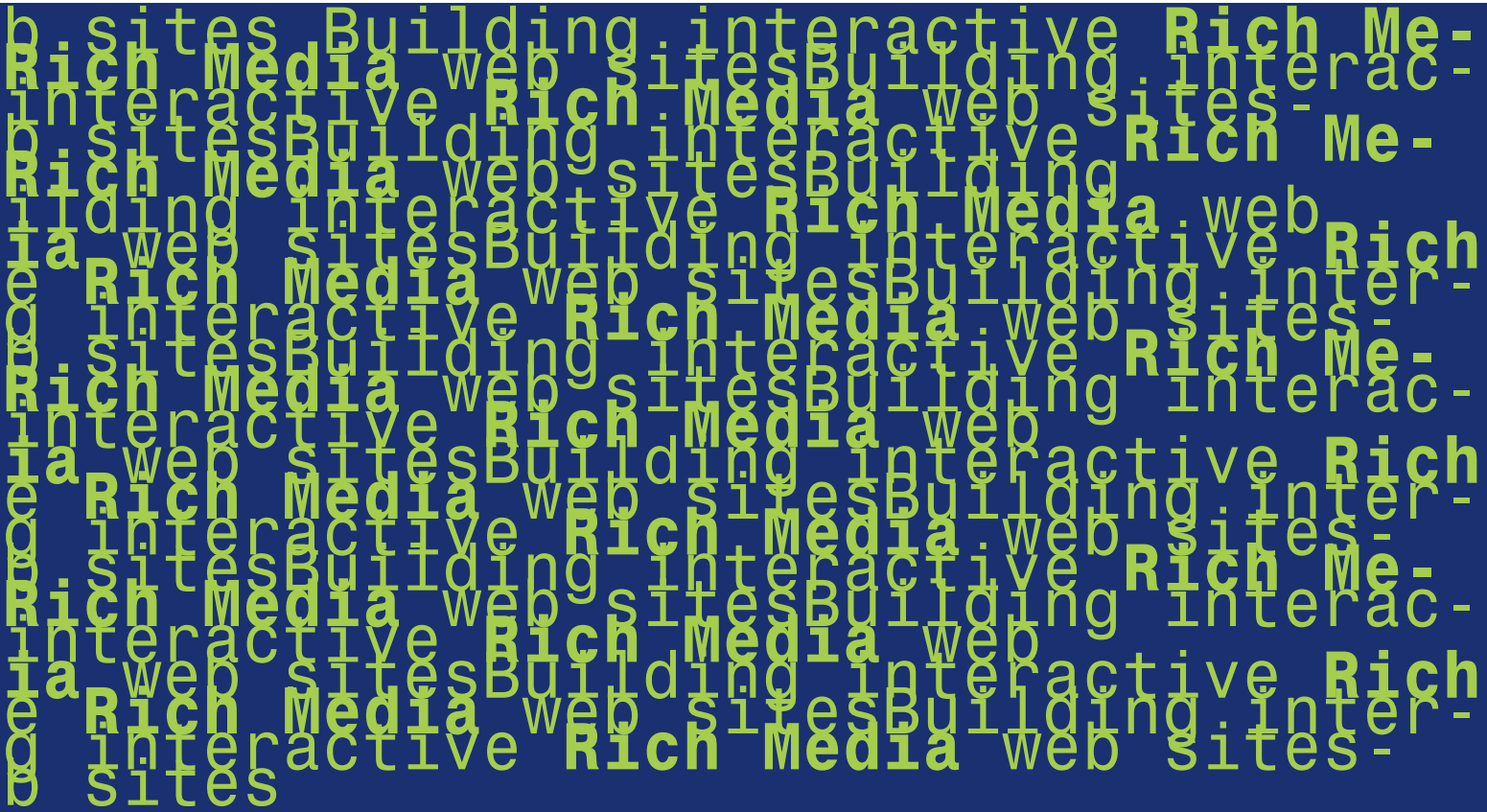


Which creator of standards do we bet on? Adobe or Macromedia? We all know how important PostScript is. Invented by Adobe and adopted by everyone involved with print publishing, PostScript will now be built by Apple into the core of Mac OS X, a move which will likely regain some of the print graphic designers that were lost to the PC platform. But with the explosion of the web, almost every graphic designer has been forced to address the Internet in some shape or form. Their future depends on it.

As the web approaches maturity, standards are taking shape to make the media easier to produce. Macromedia’s “Flash” has now obtained “standard” status. Flash now comes native, bundled with Apple’s QuickTime 4 download. Using Macromedia’s Flash 4 application, you can combine Flash and QuickTime digital video and then export the document as QuickTime. The only drawback is the horrible interface that Macromedia has adopted to produce Flash material — it resembles versions 1.0 of Director and FreeHand.

Adobe has admitted that the Flash data file format has become “PostScript for the Web” and is introducing LiveMotion, an application that also produces Flash media. Borrowing from the AfterEffects user interface (the hottest thing to happen in the video ef-

fects compositing industry), Adobe has produced a great tool that, in my opinion, will likely become the de facto application to produce Flash graphics in the near future. As a public beta, it’s free to download from the Adobe web site.



WHAT HAPPENED TO DIRECTOR?

Macromedia's Director 8 has just been released with a few added web-specific features. But, frankly, the \$600 upgrade fee is a waste of money.

Aside from the ridiculous upgrade fee, Director's Shockwave plug-in has not been adopted as an industry standard, probably because the steep learning curve is not worth the time. I'm betting on Adobe's LiveMotion for Flash and Totally Hip's LiveStage for QuickTime interactive digital video.

My favorite digital media industry standard is Apple's QuickTime and I believe Totally Hip's LiveStage is the best authoring tool available for interactive QuickTime digital video. But, for those of you who want to get a taste of what interactive QuickTime can do, a simple QuickTime editor is also built right into Adobe GoLive. This is a feature that's poorly understood, but it's what puts Adobe a step ahead of its competitor, Macromedia Dreamweaver. Now that Adobe has bundled ImageReady with Photoshop 5.5, and LiveMotion is in public beta, their Internet solution is robust indeed.

It is now such a breeze to create graphics in PhotoShop, port them to ImageReady for slicing and dicing, and add a few Javascript rollovers. Move it to GoLive for page layout and web links. Then add interactive video via the GoLive QuickTime editor. Use LiveMotion to create "Flash" animations. It's a complete solution and it works really well.

With the pending broadband cable/ADSL modem revolution, you will see a lot more video on the web with the added bandwidth capable of providing video on demand. The 5 megabyte download required to install QuickTime on a Windows PC will take only a few minutes, letting anyone who has a broadband modem get QuickTime.

QuickTime movie trailers from upcoming feature films will probably continue to promote the use of QuickTime. Check out the full screen, full motion movie trailer of *X-Men The Movie* at Apple's web site. This is broadband at its best.

But let us not forget about the emerging business to business e-commerce via the web. Most corporations have at least a T1 line that is comparable to cable and ADSL data rates. I have recently been busy compressing several corporate videos for playback on their web sites. Originally these videos were intended for VHS distribution by sales staff but marketing directors have begun to realize that they can get a wider distribution via the Internet.

Now let's take that one step further. It is possible, using the Adobe solution, to alter the video to segment the scenes to provide QuickTime chapters and QuickTime HREF (reference) tracks. To explain it in simple terms — video will provide website interactivity instead of underlined blue links that launch web pages.

The easiest way to sell this procedure to your clients is by explaining that you intend to make an enhanced web site which

reuses the HTML pages they are currently using to promote their services. We've all heard so much about Bell/CTV and cable company mergers, but are we paying attention to what this is all about? It's interactive video via the web! Many TV stations will re-broadcast their news programs via the web, but the web versions will be interactive. Imagine a newscast that features an average 60-second lead story segment on TV, but on CTVnews.com, the same 60-second digital video is enabled to launch additional information such as printed text, Flash animations, more complete interviews via digital video, or even virtual reality!

So why does Bell want CTV? The answer is simple: advertising dollars. Put yourself in the shoes of a salesman at CTV. A sponsor such as General Motors not only gets its logo in front of TV viewers, but also gets buried into the web site's interactive digital video — where advertising is not regulated by the government.

CREATING A RICH MEDIA WEB SITE

Let's take a look at how you can build a fairly simple "rich media" web site containing interactive video that will in turn launch web pages that contain related materials. Since most of our readers are Mac-based, I am going to keep this article Mac-specific; but remember, interactive content will run on any computer that has QuickTime installed. When you upgrade to the HighSpeed edition of Sympatico or Rogers @home, you get QuickTime on the install CD-ROM. Broadband is QuickTime.

First, get to know FireWire. The iMac DV has a great program called iMovie. It's so very simple to make digital video movies using new DV cameras (although professionals may want to upgrade to a Final Cut digital video editing solution for the G4 series of computers). You can now even network computers via FireWire for fast file transfers. FireWire is so cool. Learn to use it.

Once you get the video edited (try to keep the video under five minutes) you need to compress the video for delivery via the Internet. The Pro version of QuickTime will do a reasonable job using the basic Sorenson codec but I highly suggest you upgrade to the Sorenson Pro codec and get an application called Media Cleaner Pro. The upgrades will give you variable bit rate encoding, which greatly improves the picture quality.

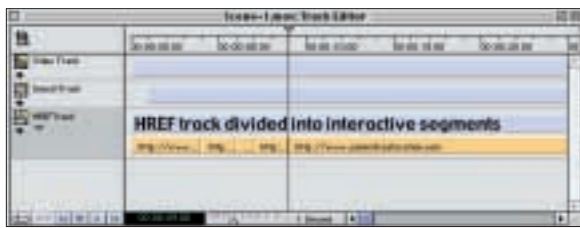
Then divide the scenes of the video into chapter points so the user can quickly jump to a specific part of the video. Let's say that two minutes into the video you will have a speech from the president of the company. By specifying the time in a QuickTime chapter track with a label called "CEO Message", you can create a jump-to-point in the video. You can also add a QuickTime HREF track to the movie and designate at that point, if the user clicks on the video, that they will launch a web page that provides additional information concerning the CEO or CEO's message.

All this is done without the aid of lingo, behaviours or complicated scripting. It's drop dead simple.

Import the compressed video into Adobe GoLive and link the video to an HTML page. Now double click on the video to open the QuickTime editor.

You will now probably see two tracks labeled as video and sound. Select >Window>Pallet, click the QuickTime Tab and then select and drag the HREF icon onto the open track editor window.

The HREF inspector window allows you to divide the video into interactive segments. The start and duration times of interactive segments can also be linked to several related web pages. If you click on the video while it is playing, the HREF track sends a message to the web



browser to launch a predetermined related HTML page. If you set the reference track to "Autoload Content", new pages can be automatically launched into a frame beside the video when the video reaches a particular point in time.

THE CORPORATE VIDEO

I approach this type of production in the simplest of terms. Most web sites are overloaded with text information that you can get lost in. I use the text information as a shooting storyboard and then make a short five-minute video that gives you an overview of the company. Basically, it's a corporate video that can be used for promotion on VHS. Then I digitize and compress the video for Cable/ADSL modem delivery at around 20 kbytes per second at 320 x 240 display size. Then I import the video into GoLive to divide it up into interactive segments using HREF tracks to link specified portions of the video to launch the web pages that I had used as research material. You can also link to "Flash" graphics, Virtual Reality panoramas or VR object movies.

If your client has a completed video, it's a real snap to add it to the web site. Just compress, link and upload the video to a web site. Forget about streaming servers unless the video is over thirty minutes long. Thirty minutes of video uses around 50 MB at 25 KB per second and will still download without waiting in real time even if the user has a slow cable/ADSL connection.

If the user has the Pro version of QuickTime, they can save the video on their hard drive. Any Internet hosting company can deliver HTTP





QUICKTIME CONTEST UPDATE

For readers who have been wondering what ever happened to our QuickTime VR contest, well, we have good news.

Many new exciting developments have recently transpired and we wanted to incorporate them into the promotion to enhance the purpose and objective of the contest. We now have a major sponsor — Bell Canada, via the BellFund and its multimedia division Actimedia.

To bring Bell Canada on board we had to revamp the objective of the awards/contest. We had initially planned to produce a DVD featuring Virtual Reality panoramas from contestants and distribute this material via DVD. Bell Canada was interested in sponsoring the project, provided that the “virtual reality” material was available exclusively on-line via the Internet instead of an interactive DVD-ROM. That request seemed reasonable since Bell is currently pushing its broadband ADSL solutions and the rich media of virtual reality would propel the introduction of broadband services.

Bell is currently looking for content providers and producers who can deliver a virtual experience for the planned new media initiatives. We are hoping the contest will develop a wide variety of VR photographers from across Canada who can meet the demands of the emerging broadband new media industry. (Photographers — check out the MASSIVE VR object rig at Vistek, Toronto’s photo depot for pro photographers!)

The powers at Bell were hoping QuickTime VR object movies could also be included since that’s one area that fits into its electronic commerce agenda. Bell wants you to be able to buy products online, and “Virtual Objects” are ideal for obtaining 3D virtual views of products. The industry really lacks skilled producers who can photograph and author VR object movies so we hope to get the ball rolling. The final condition for sponsorship was that a television special and companion web site featuring interactive video would be produced to inform and educate the public about the possibilities of interactive video launching related VR data via the web.

All these conditions seemed reasonable to me. We are all reading about the convergence of TV and the Internet. AOL and Time. Bell and CTV. This contest is a great opportunity to teach the industry and the general public about the possibilities of broadband interactive video and linked “rich media” such as QuickTime VR, Flash and HTML text.

So here is the current agenda for our Virtual Reality contest. Our TV crews are travelling across Canada this summer to document “new media makers” who are creating virtual reality panoramas and object movies. We are now looking for individuals or companies which specialize in QuickTime VR production to profile them in our TV documentary called “Virtual Canada” on our web site vrcanada.com and in our magazine. We want to show our TV viewers and readers how you are currently capturing Canada for a virtual experience on the World Wide Web.

Whether you’re just a beginner or a seasoned professional “Virtual Reality” photographer, we want to show your stuff and explain in plain English how you do it via broadcast television and the World Wide Web. Here is your chance to win awards and prizes as a QuickTime New Media producer.

For more info, e-mail Bob Connolly at b.connolly@sympatico.ca.

QuickTime video. Some do it better than others if their server is not overloaded with too many domain name sites on a single server.

Streaming media QuickTime servers are another story, but at this point, don’t concern yourself with that. Just get some DV video into your FireWire Mac, compress it with the QuickTime Movie Player application using the Sorenson codec for video and Qualcomm PureVoice for audio and get it on-line.


Explore and experiment with video. It is going to change the face of the Internet. Adobe GoLive is QuickTime-savvy and it is really simple to incorporate interactive video into your future web projects provided the user’s browser works well with QuickTime.

DIGITAL VIDEO FOR WINDOWS?

On a final note, I have always been upset with Microsoft’s business practices and its dreaded interfaces. But the latest version of Internet Explorer 5 for the Mac has redeemed the Redmond boys in my books. They are back on track making great software for the Mac just like they did when the company was born. Their upgrade install was so simple — and it left the QuickTime extensions and plug-in settings alone. Microsoft has made an offer to the Supreme Court to no longer attempt to convince PC computer manufacturers to withhold QuickTime from being pre-installed on new computers that use the Windows operating system. The future looks very good for QuickTime.

Attention desktop publishers! Don’t let corporate video producers who are so well-versed in Windows get hold of the upcoming streaming video industry. RealVideo is Windows. The Mac invented digital video. It is simple to produce video on the Mac, especially an iMac DV. Don’t be fooled by proprietary technology streaming media jargon from Windows hardware developers. Just look at what Apple is doing on its movie trailer web site. It can all be done on your Mac via FireWire.

Flood the Internet with QuickTime. Remember, the Mac was winning the PC war in the early years until Windows came along. We now have a chance to make QuickTime the preferred “Rich Media” operating standard for delivering the next generation of the Internet.

As Austin Powers would say, “It’s *broadband*, baby! Yeah!” 

Bob Connolly is a veteran multimedia, TV and CD-ROM producer (Life Network, PBS, Vision) and a principal in BC Pictures. He can be contacted by e-mail by addressing b.connolly@sympatico.ca or by telephone (416) 521-7462.