

## PUBLISHING SOFTWARE

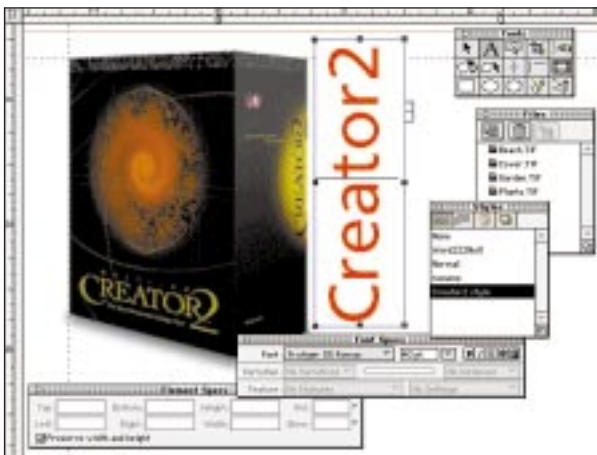
# A scriptable, comprehensive publishing application for production environments

## Multi-Ad Creator2 v1.1.1

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MULTI-AD *CREATOR2* HAS GRAPHICS AND LAYOUT CAPABILITIES beyond those of its predecessor *Creator*, which is used in the newspaper industry. But it won't displace *QuarkXPress* and *Illustrator*, or their equivalents, on designers' systems.

Creator2's floating palettes (from top): Tools palette, drag-n-drop Files palette, Styles palette (Type, Paragraph, Style Models and Element), Font Specs palette, and Element Specs palette.



Its niche is production environments, where speed is the priority and formatting is repetitive. Its strengths are scriptability, a comprehensive Styles palette, a repeating visuals palette, text arrays, matrices, and fast copy fitting.

For instance, *Creator2*'s floating Styles palette supports Type Styles (character styles), Paragraph Styles, Style Models and Element Styles (graphic styles). Style Models combine character and paragraph styles, and you can set up a series of styles within one Model. Result: imported text flows into your file completely formatted.

### APPLESCRIPT

This Macintosh application is scriptable, recordable and attachable; it comes pre-loaded with scripts and lets you add your own to a dropdown menu. Some scripts extend *C2*'s abilities by tapping into other applications on your system. The Edit Graphic script, for instance, can access an image's source file and open the application that created it. And the Export PDF script exports an EPS file, opens *Acrobat Distiller*, and then converts the EPS into a PDF file.

For installation, *Creator2* provides *ATM 4.0.2* and *Acrobat Reader 3.0.1*, which it requires. But if you use *ATM Deluxe*, you'll have to order the 4.0.3 update from Adobe (about \$40 with shipping). And if you have *Adobe Acrobat* on your system, you'll have to remove the ATM Font Database and re-install *Acrobat* as well. One other caution: if you have a defective font open, the application will not run.

Be aware that *Creator2* relies on QuickDraw GX for type and graphics and will not open without the GXGraphics extension. Also note that [www.insanely-great.com](http://www.insanely-great.com) says this about OS 8.1 and GX: "Applications which use GX may not print correctly." In addition, Apple's *Carbon Paper, Transitioning to Mac OS X* includes the following: "Due to limited developer adoption Carbon will not support Quickdraw GX."

### MULTIPLE PAGE OUTPUT

*Creator2*'s New Document dialogue gives you extensive page size options, including a Standard Advertising Unit set and a Television Magazine Advertising Unit set. But it omits a crucial option: an auto-feature for generating the boxes and pages necessary to accommodate imported text. You have to draw every box. And *C2*'s text boxes don't support multiple columns either. So changing a two-column layout to three in a multi-page file means reconstructing each page manually. *Creator2* also can't generate an index or table of contents. It has auto page numbering, but no section command. *C2* can mix page sizes in a file — but you might want to consider file output implications before doing this.

This application has two types of page guides: a customizable grid, and an editorial style with columns or horizontal rows. Individual guides are manipulated from the edge of the layout window only.

### INTERFACE

*Creator2*'s interface has productive features like the Styles palette, and a floating Files palette for storing and instantly retrieving source files that are used repeatedly.

Contextual graphic and text box dialogues can be called up by simply double-clicking an element. And double-clicking an imported element provides detailed source info. It's also noteworthy that undos are unlimited.

But the interface is annoyingly counter-productive. For a start, *Creator2*'s palettes are proportioned tall-and-wide, intruding unnecessarily into layouts.

*Creator 2*'s floating Font palette provides no paragraph options (or U/LC commands). You have to access dialogues to adjust paragraph alignment, leading and tracking. There's no floating document palette for an ongoing overview of your file, or click-and-drag page management. Instead, there's a text-only page selector. The Element Specs palette doesn't include content management.

A fundamental omission is that there's no zoom tool; a drop-down menu provides default percentages that you can't modify — to input percentages, you have to go into a palette. To zoom to specific positions on the page you have to click through the defaults. There's no hand tool on the Tool palette; it's accessible by keyboard only.

Text boxes, when deselected, have no visible boundaries. There's also no command for turning invisible charac-

ters on and off. An image box and its contents can't be resized independently, so images have to be trimmed with a cropping tool. Also, you can't nudge the contents with arrow keys.

To add to all this, I experienced persistent 'noise' problems with 32-bit display, such as lines appearing between letters when I selected and deselected copy.

## TEXT

The Character Attributes dialogue lets you alter non-GX fonts by percentage in several ways: Boldness, Slant (positive and negative) and Outline Weight. A Tracking field lets you set values in thousandths of an em. *Creator2* accesses GX font characteristics (although few vendors sell GX fonts).

By comparison, *QuarkXPress* provides integrated, detailed hyphenation and justification controls, plus controls for ligatures, auto kerning, superscript, subscript, accents, em spaces and flex spaces, among others. Of this list, *Creator2* provides only a few simple hyphenation options — and that's it. It can't generate small caps or drop caps.

A Break Text option lets you place imported text into a series of boxes. Breaks are determined by delimiters in the source text or paragraphing. This procedure is particularly effective when you apply tags or a *C2* style model, and *Creator2* can generate the boxes automatically. But here's the catch: *Creator2* places your text into a single array; it can't automatically place boxes on succeeding pages, so you'll likely be creating individual boxes by hand. To do this, you 'load' your pointer with text, then drag to make a box — and the text flows automatically.

*Creator2's* built-in interpreter reads only RTF files. The application relies on MacLink Plus translators in your system for other file types.

To create Style Models with multiple entries, you input successive pairs of character and paragraph styles. These pairs should be set up with existing style sheets, not constructed from scratch — because after exiting the dialogue you can't fully access your Style Model again. *Creator2's* notion of editing is to place your cursor in a paragraph with an existing style and re-select Make Style Model. The resulting dialogue contains only the first style pair in the series.

The Make Matrix command is sort of a hybrid of *Creator2's* Duplicate and Break Text commands. It lets you duplicate single or grouped elements and proportion them to fit an array; and it can include both graphics and text.

A Copy Fit command enables you to resize or scale text to fit existing text boxes. *Creator2* lets you scale the text for an exact fit, adjust by point size, or adjust leading.

In *QuarkXPress*, a runaround on an element works with any text. But *C2's* Wrap Text dialogue defines a relationship between specific text boxes and elements, and works only in that relationship. You can only apply one offset to an element. So if you specify a quarter-inch offset, you can end

up with a quarter-inch runaround on the sides of the element and a half-inch top and bottom (determined by the offset plus leading in adjacent text). You can't automatically flow text around the contours of an image, create genuine clipping paths, or make use of embedded paths in images. You can't place graphics in-line or place text on paths.

However, if you save a file that has overflow text, the application displays a caution, and points out the overflow.

## GRAPHICS

You can place graphics and pics by drag-n-drop from the Finder to the page. *Creator2* supports EPS (including DCS1 and 2), TIFF, PICT, JPEG, GIF and *Photoshop 3.0* formats, among others.

The Make Element Style dialogue enables you to create a style based on an existing element. It provides detailed frame, fill and shadow specs, plus an ink preview.

*Creator2* enables you to apply drop shadows to any element and stipulate offsets. You can fill shadows with supplied and imported graphic textures, or gradients. But *C2* doesn't support plug-ins or extensions, so other shadow types, such as soft shadows, need to be created externally.

A Mask Graphic command lets you eliminate monochrome backgrounds in graphics and images (crudely), and the dialogue accepts *Photoshop* masks. You can mask one element with another using a Containment tool. I found this procedure to be a less-than-satisfactory workaround for *C2's* inability to put a frame on an imported graphic or image.

*Creator2* lets you convert text and shapes to paths, its only means for merging shapes. *C2's* implementation of Path and Freehand tools is strange: its pseudo-bézier curves do not meet their control points. And control points can only be accessed with a Reshape tool. The points have no handles; all you can do is drag them.

A Fill Gradient dialogue provides a comprehensive set of gradient types and contextual options for each. A Separation submenu lets you display the cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK) constituents of your file, plus spot colors. (This is for reference, not proofing, since the display is not based on a PostScript interpretation.)

*Creator2* exports spreads, text or elements as EPS (with or without fonts), TIFF (at a maximum resolution of 288 dpi), GIF, or text files. To integrate *Creator2* layouts into a *QuarkXPress* workflow, you have to import them as EPS or TIFF pictures.

Consider this application if your environment is dedicated to producing classified ads, real estate listings or other content that uses modular formatting, and you have in-house prepress.

*Creator2* lists for \$1,395 (street price \$899). It ships with *Search Text&Image Database* and *Texture Creator*. Contact Multi-Ad Services at 800-465-2127. A demo is available on the Web at [www.multi-ad.com](http://www.multi-ad.com). \*