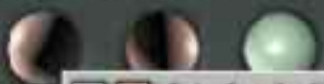


Light 1 Color.



(above) Poser 3's new Lighting Palette. If the selection above isn't enough for you, you can also sample from any picture you have. Although Poser 3 has retained the "hoola hoops" for angling each light, you'll find when you're using the Face Camera, you're in so close that you keep moving body parts. This is really too bad because the most fascinating thing about the new Zygote models is the ability of the eyes to reflect highlights as the lighting changes.

Camera Controls



SOFTWARE
Put on a happy face

MetaCreations Poser 3

BY RON GIDDINGS

OK, I ADMIT IT. I'M IN LOVE.

My wife says I've been playing with MetaCreation's new *Poser 3* far too long for a man my age, but you know, you reach a point in *Poser* where you have just the perfect model. She doesn't move while you set up the lights or while you change lenses — until you want her to.

Forget about Lara Croft. This is the ultimate boy's toy.

Whatever you may think about Kai's "metaworld", this is a wonderful environment to create in.

I, for one, am so glad that Bryce's Virtual Trackball is now incorporated into *Poser 3*. In the old *Poser*, you never even had a magnifying glass tool, and finding any of the cameras was a monumental chore. But now we have Face and Hand Cameras, Dollying and Virtual Trackball to let you examine your model from absolutely any angle.

LOOKSTOO GOOD TO BETRUE

Once you see *Poser's* new previews, you'll never want to put up with wireframe again. The response of the figures to lighting changes extends even into the highlights in the eyes. The remarkable thing is this does not rely on Quick-Draw 3D or OpenGL or any of the other 3D accelerators.

Hair actually attaches to the head properly now. In *Poser 2*, bringing in a hair "object" required sizing, positioning and "parenting" — when you moved the head, you had to make sure that the hair moved with it. Now hair styles and hand shapes are automatically attached. Even if you stretch the hair longer and change it to blue, all the links remain intact. In the old version, it was very easy to "break" a leg or dislocate an arm. The only option was to smooth it out in *Photo-shop*. This still happens in the new version but the live preview immediately reveals any impossible contortions.

SPLITTING HAIRS

One thing that hasn't changed is the necessity to continuously undo. Believe me, you're going to want to use the full tracking mode with its realistic preview, but you better have the processing speed to keep it moving smoothly. Otherwise figures will suddenly lurch into an unwanted position as you wait for your processor to catch up with your mouse.

But if you use the Face Camera to adjust your lighting, make sure you do it *after* you've positioned the figure. In an entirely inexplicable piece of program design, re-posing your figure to one of the library poses will reset the face to



(right) Not only does *Poser 3* feature an amazing range of facial expressions, but its library of phonemes (mouth positions representing various sounds) can be synchronized with an imported sound file.

(below) Hands now have individually movable digits in case you can't find what you need in *Poser's* library of 64 positions (including sign language and shadow puppets).



Phonemes



its default blank stare. If you've spent hours adjusting the lighting to get just the right catch-lights in the eyes, you're going to be really disappointed when you find out that what you saw in the preview doesn't render at all. What a tease!

One big improvement that caught my attention...the lighting tools. Clicking on each lighting sphere opens a color palette full of every sort of gradation, as well as the option of "eyedropping" your color from anywhere. This means you can match the lighting, color and position of an imported background much more easily than before.

IT'S ALIVE!!

Now imagine moving an arm, saving it, moving it farther, saving it again, and hav-



(above) With all these stunning facial controls, couldn't someone have given us a tool in Poser to make both eyes move in sync? It's also missing a "blink" tool for closing eyes.



Full marks to Zygote for the new Poser models. As you can see, a Poser 2 model (above left) looks like a mannequin beside version 3's new figures. If you go to Zygote's website, you can now get additional Poser figures on CD, including different races and animals (right). They even have a dancing Sumo baby!



(above) Do you get the impression that MetaCreations likes to hide things? That cute little bulging button at the bottom holds all your animation controls. The fact that Poser can incorporate BVH motion capture files with such high res characters as well as import QuickTime backgrounds isn't even mentioned in the manual. In Poser 3 we find for the first time the convergence we expected to see once Fractal merged with KPT. You're going to have to go to [ftp://ftp.metacreations.com/pub/Applications/Poser/goodies/advanced_techniques.pdf](http://ftp.metacreations.com/pub/Applications/Poser/goodies/advanced_techniques.pdf) to find out how to bring Poser figures into Ray Dream and Bryce. This is brand new code but it shows you where Poser can go. By the way, you should check out Biovision at www.biovision.com and House of Moves www.moves.com for even more BVH files. If you think Poser is great for still images, wait until you see it move. The CD contains 18 motion capture files that you can import into Poser, which will chug away creating 300 frames that you can save either as a QuickTime movie or as a series of PICTs. As you can see in the frame grabs above, backgrounds can be brought into Poser, the lighting color and angle adjusted to match and real human motion applied to your character.



(above) Buried at the top of the screen is Poser's Walk Designer. This real-time animator has parameters for hip or arm swing, and does all the in-betweening to produce a finished animation that can follow a path that you define.



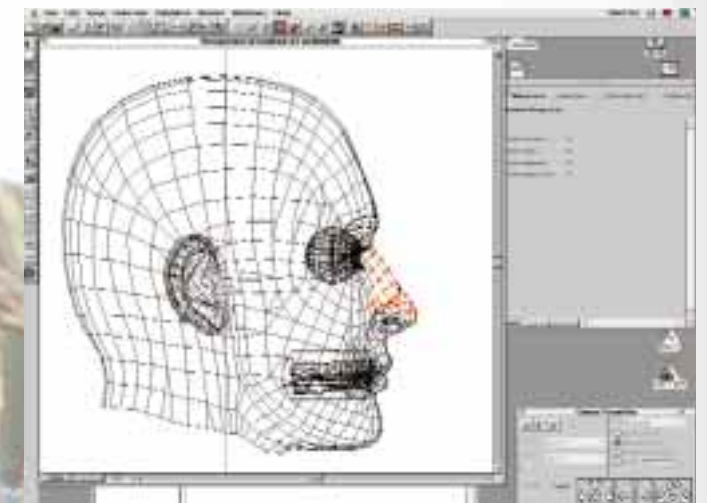
(above) One thing that hasn't gone away in Poser 3 is the continuing possibility to go overboard with expressions or body positions. The almost real-time previews are so good looking, you'll want to leave Tracking on full if you have a fast enough machine. Without full Tracking turned on, your figure simplifies to connected cubes between each change of position. However, with full Tracking on, you may experience big jumps in position as your computer catches up.

ing this program figure out all the in-betweens for you. Then imagine being able to go back in and edit the transition. This is the real Black Magic in Poser 3.

Sound files can now be opened and a corresponding mouth shape (called a phoneme) can be matched to each syllable. Voila! Instant talking head! Sure, all your friends using Maya or Studio3DMax will snicker, but I bet they'll never have as much fun as you will.

One cautionary note: a full Poser 3 install is a monstrous 380MB — hell, that's more than Photoshop with all my plug-ins. Here's

(below) Pick Your Nose. Included on the Poser CD are upgraded Ray Dream Studio plug-ins that allow Poser geometries to be imported into Ray Dream and manipulated using the Mesh tool. After distorting to your heart's content, the geometry can be exported to Poser as a wavefront.obj file which you can now use as a Morph Target. A new dial shows up to control the degree of the transition.



your excuse for picking up that extra hard drive.

But, alas! true love doesn't necessarily come cheap.

Poser 3 is available now at a street price of \$299. Check out MetaCreations' at www.metacreations.com to get the most up-to-date info.

RON GIDDINGS IS A TORONTO PHOTOGRAPHER AND DIGITAL ARTIST. WRITE TO HIM AT GIDDINGS@YESIC.COM.

METACREATIONS POSER 3

Recommended System Requirements: Macintosh PowerPC or IBM Pentium

Recommended RAM: 32MB

Full install: 380MB

Street Price: \$299 CDN

