

WEB CONVERSION

BeyondPress and Myrmidon ease the pain of converting QuarkXPress to HTML

Extensis BeyondPress 4.0 Myrmidon Version 2

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THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE ROOM FOR HTML IN QUARK'S UNIVERSE. So far, Quark's only acknowledgement that it exists is a downloadable XTension for *QuarkXPress 4*, called *Quark HTML Text Export*. This beta XTension exports only text selections, minus layout; and if it goes the way of Quark's unusable *PDF Filter*, it will be in beta forever. For Mac and Windows users who want to repurpose *QuarkXPress* files,

Original QuarkXPress page on the left: Which of the other two is the best HTML rendition? Myrmidon (middle) has created a big uneditable GIF out of the overlapping images and text. BeyondPress (right) has lost the images but the text is editable HTML.



there's *BeyondPress 4.0*, an XTension to *QuarkXPress*; for Mac users there's also *Myrmidon Version 2*, a Chooser-based utility. Both *Myrmidon* and *BeyondPress* also promote themselves as viable means for turning *QuarkXPress* into an end-to-end Web production tool.

BEYONDPRESS 4.0

BeyondPress 4.0 enables you to create Web pages with formatted text, image maps, multiple columns, hypertext links, GIF and JPEG images, and multimedia elements like animated GIFs and Java applets. You can export page layouts using authoring mode. Or export individual items in any order to create a page from the item subset, using conversion mode.

BeyondPress renders *QuarkXPress* layouts using either HTML tables or DHTML positioning; if you want to export both versions to accommodate differing browsers, then *BeyondPress* provides the JavaScript for redirecting the viewer to the appropriate version of your pages.

This XTension adds an Extensis drop down menu to *QuarkXPress*'s interface, from which you call up the Attributes Inspector. This floating Inspector is contextual; it identi-

fies your selection type and provides corresponding options: when an image is selected, for instance, choosing either GIF or JPEG calls up appropriate modifiers. Unlinked text boxes can be converted into images, with anti-aliasing. Complex graphics, like headlines, with hand-kerned text, shadow, lines or shapes, can be grouped and exported as an image.

The Attributes Inspector can be expanded to display a 100% preview of your image. An eyedropper is provided here for selecting transparency colors for GIFs. And rudimentary rectangle and circle tools enable you to assign URLs for image maps.

With nothing selected, the Inspector shows current page settings; here you can determine page attributes and content, including background color and image, link colors and meta tags, on an item-by-item basis.

You can customize and then override any of *Beyond-*

Press' preferences on an individual basis. For instance, the XTension defaults to GIF when converting TIFF and EPS images, but you can re-assign this setting to JPEG; and the new setting can be overridden as circumstances require, with the Attributes Inspector.

The XTension exports font information as either font face tags or Cascading Style Sheets. It also outputs dynamic font info, enabling the downloading of temporary fonts to browsers. And you can customize *BeyondPress*' default style mapping. For instance, one of your custom *QuarkX-*

Press style sheets can be mapped to <H1> and another to <H2>. Some styles, such as revision comments, can be suppressed; tab-delimited text can be converted to HTML tables.

Multimedia files, such as Java Applets, MIDI, PDF, *QuickTime*, *Real Audio* and *Shockwave*, can be simply dragged-and-dropped onto the *QuarkXPress* document from a Shared Element palette; and new file types can be added by the user. *BeyondPress* automatically generates the embedding code; and extra parameters can be entered. The Mac version previews animated GIFs, *QuickTime* movies and Java. The palette also lets you add Custom and Master HTML elements to your Web pages.

The Mac version of *BeyondPress* is Applescriptable.

BeyondPress creates default folders for pages and shared files (Images, Media, TrueDoc Fonts) in a site folder; and automatically generates relative links. Consequently, exporting a completed document requires just a single click. An Export Progress palette, which pops up in either Export or Preview mode, provides detailed statistics on resulting file sizes and download estimates based on connection speeds. It also lists discrepancies between your original and the HTML output, such as "justified text will be output as left-

aligned in HTML” or “overlapping boxes will produce unpredictable results.” Double-clicking a reported error in the Export Progress palette highlights the corresponding item on your page.

BeyondPress ships with *Extensis PhotoAnimator*, a versatile timeline-based application for creating animated GIFs.

MYRMIDON VERSION 2

With *Myrmidon Version 2*, you can publish to the Web not only with *QuarkXPress*, but with any application that has a print command. Select *Myrmidon* in the Chooser, and then hit Print; its Wizzy-Web technology automatically converts your files to Web pages. *Myrmidon* doesn't even have a printed manual (it's HTML-based); when you open the product box, all you find is a floppy disk. It seems too simple to be true.

Conversion settings are created by accessing *Myrmidon's* Page Setup dialogue from within your application and this is the sole means of altering the defaults. Within the General category, you can instruct *Myrmidon* to build a linked table of contents out of document headings. The Multi-page Documents category lets you decide how many print pages equal a Web page and whether *Myrmidon's* default navigation buttons should be inserted at the top or bottom of each page.

By default, *Myrmidon* identifies a single line of text as a heading if it is bold and has 12 points of white space above and below it. If your headings don't match the defaults, you can alter these characteristics; this is as close as you get to style mapping. You can turn HTML heading styles on and off individually. Lists are also supported, but as with headings, you'll probably get more-WYSIWYG results by not using them.

Like *BeyondPress*, *Myrmidon* builds invisible tables to preserve the look of multiple text columns. Besides table controls, the Multi-column category provides a Build *GoLive Cyberstudio* Layout Grid option.

The Colors category provides standard background and link options, plus a 216-color palette and dither options. In the text category, you simply tick off text attributes that should be preserved, instead of defaulting to the browser.

Myrmidon sets up an image folder and corresponding links, but it doesn't support multimedia. Image conversion is determined by turning icons on and off in the Graphics category. By default, text that is contained in a rectangular border or which intersects graphics is converted to an image. To force conversion, you have to place an invisible rectangle behind your text — there's no direct means as in *BeyondPress*; and more unfortunately, GIF and JPEG output can't be determined on an individual basis — everything is either one or the other. Anti-aliasing is also universal.

There are no image options like GIF transparency and image mapping, no previews, No DHTML support, no error feedback — so what's its big plus? If your layouts are rela-

tively simple, *Myrmidon* does a reasonable job, considering that it lists for \$69 (US).

MUTUAL PROBLEMS

Both *Myrmidon* and *BeyondPress* are hamstrung by HTML's type and layer handling limitations. Things get particularly nasty when you use runarounds in *QuarkXPress* (and who doesn't). *Myrmidon* will render the layout fairly accurately, but it does so by turning overlapping images and entire text columns into big uneditable GIFs. When you turn off overlapping text and graphic conversion, *Myrmidon* outputs an insanely scrambled layout. With *BeyondPress*, if your images are sitting on text, none of them will make it to your Web page. And turning on DHTML won't help: the images will end up sitting in front of and obscuring the text — and if you resize the browser window, the layout will deconstruct. There's just one viable solution: redo your layout.

To use *QuarkXPress* for designing finished Web pages from scratch, you've got to delve into *Myrmidon's* or *BeyondPress'* procedural and HTML-imposed idiosyncracies to find out what works when they output HTML. And to do it reasonably well, you have to know HTML anyway.

To me, it makes more sense to just use an HTML editor — user-crafted code is cleaner than automated code. And you can make superior GIFs and JPEGs with dedicated Web graphics processors.

In workstreams, *BeyondPress* and *Myrmidon* are particularly useful for moving preliminary content, comp material or existing finished pages from *QuarkXPress* to an HTML editor. For this, visual fidelity is less important than the ability to control output and generate usable code. *BeyondPress* has a pronounced edge here, with its more comprehensive features and extensive access to individual elements. *



EXTENSIS BEYONDPRESS 4.0

Recommended system requirements
Power Macintosh, System 7.5.1 - 8.1,
QuarkXPress 3.32 - 4.03
Pentium, Windows 95, 98 or NT 3.0,
QuarkXPress 4.03

Retail price \$499.95 (US)
www.extensis.com/purchase
800-796-9798



MYRMIDON VERSION 2

Recommended system requirements
68020 Mac or better, Power PC,
System 7

Retail price \$99 (US)
Online price \$69 (US)
www.terrymorse.com