

WEB AUTHORIZING

Update provides collaborative design enhancements, comprehensive site management and third-party integration

Macromedia Dreamweaver 2

BY PETER DUDAR

DREAMWEAVER 1 PREMIERED AS A HIGH-END VISUAL AUTHORIZING application with two standout features: roundtrip HTML, which lets you display an HTML inspector and Document window simultaneously; plus browser 4+ capabilities like DHTML, CSS and JavaScript behaviors. Its 4+ support has been rivaled by editors like *NetObjects Fusion*, *FrontPage 2000* and *GoLive CyberStudio*, but *Dreamweaver* remains the sole implementer of full-fledged roundtrip HTML. *Dreamweaver 2* ups the ante with dramatic new layout and collaborative features like tracing layers and templates, plus enhanced server-side functionality and integration with third-party tools.

Changes to its understated interface are not immediately apparent: as before, you drag page components like tables, layers and images from the Object palette to the Document window; and properties relevant to selected objects are



Rollovers. The dialogue automatically assigns preload info for your original image, prompts for the alternative image, and creates the on-mouse-out event to restore your original.

modified in the Property inspector. But in version 2, most floating palettes, have been made dockable: just drag a palette over another, release, and voila: a tabbed palette. Group them to match your work patterns. To save time, you can now play *Flash*, *Shockwave* and other multimedia elements that rely on plugins directly in the Document window. And to kickstart things, the Set Color Scheme command will pull up a set of professionally coordinated page and text color schemes. *Dreamweaver's* laudable frame, style sheet, and timeline controls are pretty much the same — support for rollovers is nicely enhanced: the Swap Images dialogue, for instance, automatically assigns the anchor tag and preload info for your original image, prompts for the alternative image, and creates the on-mouse-out event to restore your original.

TRACING LAYER

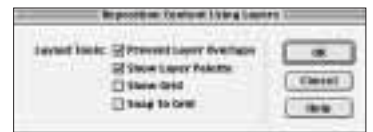
Designers and coders who work from *Photoshop* comps are going to love *Dreamweaver 2* for its new tracing feature alone. Duplicating comps is usually a multi-window process.

In version 2 you simply select Tracing Image > Load, adjust the transparency on the slider that pops up and you're set. To fit the image into existing page elements, you can use the arrow keys, input coordinates or align it with a selection. *Dreamweaver 2* reads JPEG, GIF or PNG (*Fireworks'* native format) tracing files. So you're not limited to *Photoshop* for source material: you can use anything that displays on your screen, including screen grabs from an application like *QuarkXPress*. Just re-save the source file with an application that supports one of the above formats.

ROUNDRIP LAYERS-TO-TABLES

Dreamweaver uses cursor-based positioning; but layers can be inserted anywhere, and they're easily repositioned.

Layers to table conversion was introduced in version 1.2 as a quick means of making pages browser 3 compatible. Then someone hit on the notion that this is also a creative layout process; so enhanced Reposition Content Using Layers and Convert Layers to Table commands now reside in *Dreamweaver 2's* Modify menu. Since the procedure is roundtrip, existing tables can be redesigned using layers, then re-converted to tables. And you can tick a Prevent



Roundtrip layers-to-tables. Roundtrip conversion lets you take advantage of absolute positioning by designing with layers, and also affect the automated code for table layouts.

Overlap option to avert setting up non-convertible layers. There are two ways to convert layers to a table. Most Accurate precisely matches your positioning, but generates more empty cells. Smallest: Collapse Empty Cells, on the other hand, instructs *Dreamweaver* to eliminate empty cells below a user-specified width. So it delivers leaner code, but less fidelity. You can also tick Use Transparent GIFs on or off. In any case, you're still going to end up with some one- or three-pixel cells. But unlike competing products, you have some control over automated output, superfluous code can be curtailed, and the results are relatively more editable.

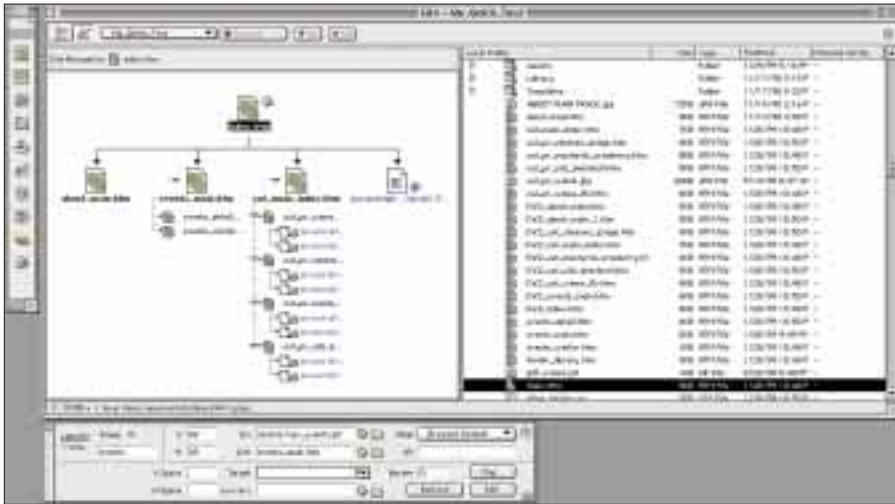
Version 2 enables multi-layer selection and changes.

TABLE EDITING

If you're setting up data tables, *Dreamweaver 2* lets you work *Microsoft Excel*- or *Word*-style. Version 2 enables you to select columns with a single click or by dragging through the cells. Moving a column inside a table is then a simple cut and paste procedure. You can se-



Table Editing. The Sort Table dialogue lets you reconfigure cells using alphabetical and numerical permutations.



Site Management. Coupled in the Site window with *Dreamweaver's* list view of your files, the site map is a fast, slick way to modify your files and reorganize your site. *Dreamweaver* tracks your changes, automatically updating all links; and the map visually identifies broken links. Also shown are *Dreamweaver's* Object palette (left) and the Property Inspector (bottom).

lect noncontiguous cells by Control- or Command-clicking and then apply changes as a group via the Property inspector. And a Sort Table dialogue enables users to reconfigure cells using alphabetical and numerical permutations.

To get the table-making process over with fast, *Dreamweaver 2* provides a Format Table dialogue with thumbnails of pre-coded table formats. You can customize a format within the dialogue by determining text formatting, substituting colors and changing the table's alternating color scheme.

DREAM TEMPLATES

Dreamweaver 2's templates have user-defined locked regions and editable regions for page-specific data. Once you apply a template to a set of pages, you can later edit information within the template and then reapply it to those pages. So besides their suitability to pages with a common structure and look, the templates give you design control in team situations. Customizable highlighting identifies editable and non-editable regions in both the Document window and HTML inspector, as well as the template.

To update page appearance, you can switch templates by simply dragging-and-dropping a new template file onto the page. If both templates use the same placeholder names, unique content won't change; and the placeholders needn't be in the same position.

XML is the anticipated metalanguage of e-commerce- and data-driven sites, and like HTML, is derived from SGML, so it follows that *Dreamweaver* has supplemented roundtrip HTML with roundtrip XML. And since templates are a means of separating content from design, they're XML compatible. You can import XML content as a template or export editable regions as XML.

SITE MANAGEMENT

Site maps are nothing new in visual editors, but for me, *Dreamweaver 2's* elegant schematic is the easiest to interpret. Coupled in the Site window with *Dreamweaver's* list view of your files, the site map is a fast, slick way to open pages, add or rename files, create links, and reorganize your site. *Dreamweaver* tracks your changes, automatically updating all links; and the map visually identifies broken links. You can select multiple, noncontiguous pages, and the highlighting is reflected in the map and list view. Besides linking by means of menus, the site map exploits two other

technologies: drag-and-drop and point-to-file.

With point-to-file, you simply drag the cursor from a point-to-file icon that's next to a file in the map, to a file in the list view. (*CyberStudio* users call this Point and Shoot linking.) Point-to-file links can also originate outside the Site window. You can drag from point-to-file icons in the contextual Property inspector to files in the window. Also, by holding down Shift, you can link from a selection in an open document to another open document, or to any visible anchor.

The map layout is highly customizable; and for detailed examination, can be redrawn from the perspective of one of its branches. You can also save the map as an image for online use or for printing with an image editor.

Dreamweaver's new site-wide search-and-replace engine is fast and heavy duty, supporting text, HTML source code, and tag specific searches — sort of like *BEdit's* with visuals. You can search grep-style with regular expressions, or have the engine ignore differences in whitespace. When you execute a search, the floating dialog returns a live report of every sought instance; and if you then call up a source file,



MACROMEDIA DREAMWEAVER 2.0

Recommended system requirements
Power Macintosh, OS 7.5.5 or later,
24 MB RAM

Intel Pentium Processor or equivalent,
90+ MHz, Windows 95/98 or
NT 4.0 or later, 32 MB RAM

Retail price \$299 (US), includes
BBEdit 5.0 or HomeSite 4.0
Upgrade \$129 (US)
Electronic upgrade \$99 (US)
(Upgrades do not include BBEdition 5.0
or HomeSite 4.0)

Web Essentials bundle (including
Fireworks) available for an additional
\$99 (US)

Trial version available at
www.dreamweaver.com
Macromedia Inc. 800-470-7211

the instance comes up highlighted.

When performing a tag search, you can specify accompanying or excluded attributes, what the tag can or can't contain, or whether the target tag should or shouldn't be inside another. The parameters can be compounded; and search patterns can be saved for recall.

EXTENSIBILITY, INTEGRATION AND DYNAMIC PUBLISHING

The usual way to preview server-side content (e-commerce, database) is to post the site to a server and then open up a browser. By supporting Server Side Include (SSI), *Dreamweaver 2* visually renders of server-side content in its Document window (What You See Is What You Serve). You can't edit the server content on the page, but you can move it around in the layout.

Demonstrating real foresight, Macromedia has been aggressively integrating *Dreamweaver* with e-commerce and dynamic publishing solutions — collaborating with providers like Allaire (*Cold Fusion*), Broadvision (e-commerce and knowledge management applications), Oracle (*Oracle 8i* Internet database), iCat (*iCat Commerce Online*), IBM (*HotMedia*), Tango, Real Networks, Headspace and others. *Dreamweaver 2* works seamlessly with third-party software because it was designed to do so — through its open, extensible architecture. Consequently, these solutions can be integrated into *Dreamweaver's* configurable interface as commands inserted via HTML, XML, JavaScript and C — and placed into the Objects palette or anywhere in the pull down menus. As well, you can customize Property inspectors; and write your own objects, behavior actions, commands and data translators.

Even in a vacuum, this upgrade would reaffirm *Dreamweaver's* top of the line status. But to be taken seriously nowadays, a visual authoring application also needs to stand out in two ways: significant third party integration (as above), and integration into a native line of industry-standard applications.

Macromedia's related lineup is pretty impressive: *Flash*, *Fireworks*, *Director*, *Shockwave*, *Generator*, *Freehand*. You'd have to check out Adobe for a comparable lineup: *ImageReady*, *Acrobat*, *Illustrator* and most importantly, *Photoshop*, which everybody uses. And Adobe's recent purchase of Mac-only *CyberStudio*, with the intention to add a Windows version, could decidedly spur competition. To bolster cross-product use within their lines, both Adobe and Macromedia are actively integrating the interfaces and functionality of their applications.

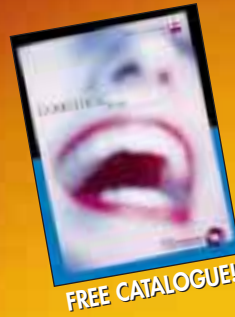
Of course, there are others going for the high end as well. But right now, when you look at both the small picture (standalone features), and the big picture (extensibility, integration), it seems that *Dreamweaver 2* is pushing the envelope furthest. *

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S T O C K P H O T O G R A P H Y

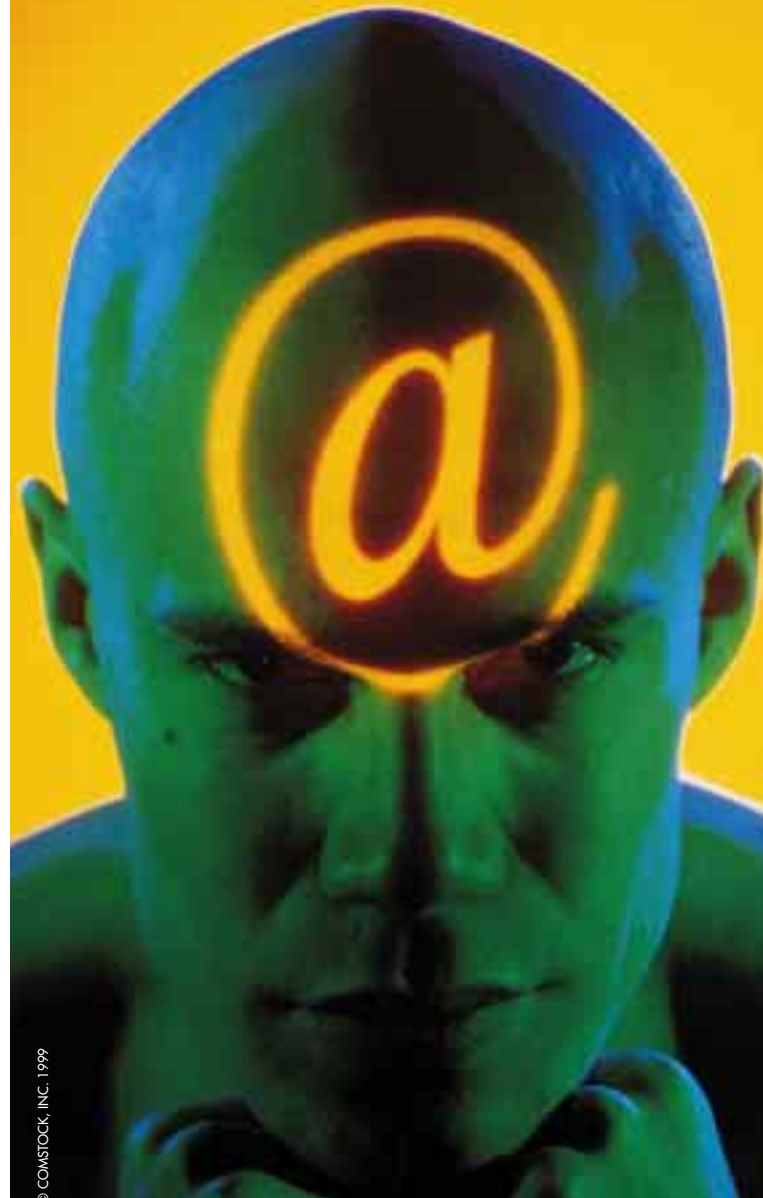
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