

GRAPHIC EXCHANGE

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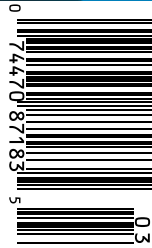
Extensis PreFlight Pro

Macromedia Fireworks 2

Adobe GoLive 4



\$4.50 JUN/JUL 1999



The Swiss knife of Web graphics puts on a new interface and gets a lot slicker

Macromedia Fireworks 2.0.2

BY PETER DUDAR

FIREWORKS 1.0 WENT AFTER WEB DESIGNERS BY INTEGRATING vector, bitmap, and image optimization tools — and supplying Web-specific functions such as image mapping, image slicing, GIF animation, and automatic JavaScript rollovers. Its vector-based tools created Bézier paths and shapes with bitmap-like brush strokes and textured fills that were always editable. Live effects, like drop shadows, bevels, embosses and glows, could be applied with a couple of clicks. Perhaps its most lauded feature was the Export window, which enabled users to adjust four versions of a graphic side-by-side. *Fireworks 2.0* is more sophisticated, yet sleeker; it sports a revised interface, improved image slicing, and new rollovers, plus enhancements to optimization, animation, and image editing.

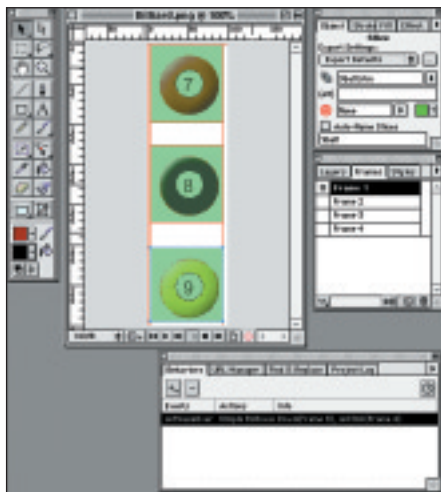
INTERFACE AND PRODUCTIVITY

The more intuitive interface keeps critical parts of the design process accessible, partly by using tabbed palettes; and

it has incorporated *Free-hand* and *Dreamweaver* elements. The context-sensitive Object inspector enables you to set attributes such as opacity and blending mode, plus parameters for hotspot or rollover objects. The Behaviors inspector lists all behaviors pertinent to a selected Web object, making it quick and easy to create rollover effects. The URLs toolbar is no more; the Hotspot and Slice tools have shifted to the Toolbox and are

now placed on the Web layer, which manages Web objects, that are used for assigning interactivity to exported files.

Toggling between object mode (vector) and image edit mode (bitmap) has been streamlined. To get into image edit mode, just double-click an image object or use an image-applicable tool (like marquee, magic wand or rubber stamp) on the object. To get out, simply hit Esc or click the Stop



The intuitive interface. (clockwise from left) the Toolbar, which now includes the Slice and Hotspot tools; the document window; the context-sensitive Objects inspector; Frames panel; Behaviors inspector

button on the Status bar.

With *Fireworks 2*, you can apply more than one live effect to any object. Just click entries from an effect list and input specifics in the resulting dialogues. Once you save the grouping, it appears in the Multiple Effect presets pop-up, ready for re-use. You can also save styles, using any combination of stroke, fill, effect, and text settings. Note that you can modify a selected object by editing its multiple effects, but an object does not update if its style is edited. Styles can be exported and shared with other *Fireworks* users.

The Text Editor updates the canvas as text is input, so you don't have to keep hitting the damn Apply button to see what your wording looks like in context. Color can now be applied to selections in a single text block.

The new Find And Replace function searches for text, fonts, colors, or URLs and replaces them in a single operation; and the application tracks and archives any changes. A new URL Manager lets you list URLs currently in use, and assign them to objects by simply selecting entries — it's useful if you frequently mistype URLs.

And like your HTML editor, *Fireworks 2* can launch a Web browser to preview your current document.

SLICING, BEHAVIORS AND ANIMATION

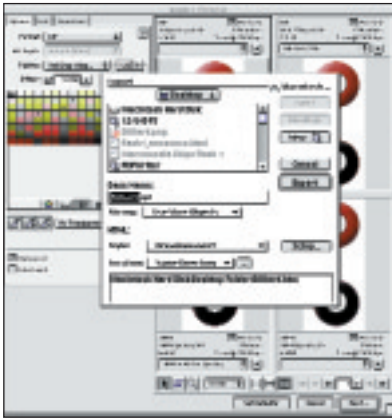
There are a couple of ways to use image slicing (which is now cleaner and simpler). You can optimize a complex graphic by sectioning it, and then compress the slices individually as either GIFs or JPEGs. Or you can use slicing for rollover effects and hot spots. Define slice objects by simply dragging, and then scale or reposition them anywhere on the canvas. Fireworks automatically sections the rest of the canvas to accommodate your slice. (*Imageready 1* slices only along guides; and doesn't output JavaScript.) Use the Object inspector to assign a slice its own color, determine export settings, assign URLs, input alt tags, target windows or frames, and assign a custom splice name.

Disjointed rollovers enable multiple image swaps to be triggered by a single rollover event, such as a user rolling over an image that's been designated as a hotspot or slice object. To target a specific part of your image to swap out, you draw a slice object over the target area, and a hotspot or slice object over the event area, then select Swap Image from the Behaviors inspector. This produces a Swap Image dialogue with a graphic indicating how your canvas is sliced. Just click a slice here to indicate your target. To swap more than one slice, apply multiple Swap Image behaviors to an event area.

JavaScript rollovers swap out entire images, so an irregularly shaped rollover is really an irregular shape drawn over a rectangular image



Swapping images. The swap image dialogue enables disjointed rollovers, and includes a graphic showing how your canvas is sliced.



Exporting HTML and images.

In front, the Export dialog provides HTML Style options, including Dreamweaver 2 and FrontPage. Behind, the Export window enables you to adjust four versions of your graphic side-by-side.

area. Creating shapes that extend beyond that area or that interlock requires complex JavaScript and slicing. *Fireworks 2* does the convoluted stuff for you — just draw a hotspot object in any shape or create one from any object. Then the hotspot can target a slice object that defines the rollover area, even if the hotspot is within the slice.

IMAGE EDITING

Resizing and resampling have arrived. In *Fireworks 1*, you couldn't change your document's resolution once it was set, so image editing was compromised. A pic couldn't be finessed at hi-res and then downsampled to 72 dpi. The new Image Size dialog takes care of that — like *Photoshop's* dialog, the one in *Fireworks* is sectioned into Pixel Dimension and Print Size fields, and provides constrain and resample options. There are also Canvas Size and Canvas Color dialogs. And *Fireworks* now retains your image's original resolution if you open it as a new file.

Still, for high-end image correction *Fireworks* is no *Photoshop*. There's no curve dialog; and levels and hue/saturation functions are provided via consumer level PhotoOptics plug-ins. *Fireworks* does, however, accept *Photoshop* plug-ins, including third-party add-ons like Alien Skin's *Eye Candy*. The easiest way to access them is to target your *Photoshop* plug-in folder using *Fireworks'* Preferences. Your scanner and camera plug-ins should also be there, which is convenient, since *Fireworks 2* imports images directly from both scanners and digital cameras.

Fireworks keeps *Photoshop* layers intact; *Illustrator* and *FreeHand* layers can also be converted to frames. Other supported import formats are: BMP, GIF, JPEG, PICT, PNG, TIFF, xRes LRG, Targa, and *CorelDraw 7* and *8*.

OPTIMIZATION AND EXPORT

The Export window still enables you to adjust four versions of a graphic side-by-side, using any of *Fireworks* ex-

ported formats: GIF, JPEG, PNG, TIFF, PICT, BMP, and xRes LRG. One new feature that's likely to see a lot of use is the Export To File Size wizard. Just input a target file size and *Fireworks* does the optimizing. And if you want go beyond 216 colors, a new dither function creates safe colors by dithering any two colors from the Web-safe palette.

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Palette management is now more on par with *ImageReady*. *Fireworks* places a diamond in a swatch to indicate that it is Web-safe; a square shows that it has been edited; and a frame means that it is locked. If you're outputting a color-critical element like a logo, locking ensures that it's unaffected when a palette is reduced or replaced. You can also sort swatches by luminance or frequency of use.

Version 2's enhanced batch processing lets you convert a selection of files to another format or alter just their particulars; and you can find and replace text, fonts, colors, or URLs. Settings are savable as cross-platform Scriptlets.

If you want to export HTML with a graphic, *Fireworks'* HTML Style options include: *Dreamweaver 2* (which places behaviors in *D2's* Behaviors inspector), *Dreamweaver Library .lbi*, and *FrontPage*. You may get cleaner results by coding simple graphics yourself, but this is a preferred way to go when exporting image maps and rollovers. Also, images from layers, slice objects, and frames can be exported as individual files or CSS layers.

Purchase considerations are so much about integration. And so much of the action centres on two players. Adobe's Web solution includes industry standard applications like *Photoshop* (*ImageReady* will be incorporated into version 5.5.), *Illustrator*, *Acrobat*, and recently acquired *Go-Live 4.0*. Macromedia has a roundtrip workflow already in place between *Dreamweaver* and *Fireworks*. And Macromedia also provides varying degrees of interoperability with *Freehand* and its Web-standard multimedia apps *Director* and *Flash*. *Fireworks 2* has so much exclusive Web functionality that you won't regret getting it, even if you own some of the Adobe products — and better still, the price has come down. *

MACROMEDIA FIREWORKS



2.0.2

System requirements

Power Macintosh Processor (G3 recommended), Mac OS 7.5.5 or later, 24 MB RAM with virtual memory on (32+ MB of available RAM with virtual memory off recommended), 60 MB hard disk space (100 MB recommended)
Pentium processor 120 (Pentium II recommended), Windows 95, 98 or NT (with Service Pack 3) or later, 32 MB RAM on Windows 95/98 (40+ MB recommended for Windows NT), 60 MB hard disk space (100 MB recommended)

Street price Fireworks 2 \$300
Dreamweaver/Fireworks Studio (includes Dreamweaver 2, BBEdit [Mac] or HomeSite [Win]) \$620
Upgrade \$200 or \$99 (US) online

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