

No Flash in the Pan

Web Animation Software Adobe LiveMotion 1.0

by Bob Connolly

When Macromedia's Flash software was released, vector-based graphics and animation brought the Web to life. Small Flash files which were fast to download, along with the addition of some MP3 audio, meant websites were no longer limited to still pictures and text.

Although Flash was able to produce stunning results, the interface was unorganized and difficult to work with. After several versions, we could only pray for Macromedia to reconstruct the program's interface and release a user-friendly version. Fortunately, Adobe has answered our prayers (yet again) and has released the newest member of the Adobe family of solutions, Adobe LiveMotion.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

I fell in love with LiveMotion the minute it launched. The interface incorporates the classic Adobe tool sets, menus and windows consistent with Illustrator and Photoshop. The timeline has its own window and looks similar to the one in AfterEffects. It has the Web page creation features of ImageReady (it creates HTML pages), and its greatest value is the ability to export Macromedia's Shockwave (SWF) files for the Web, like Flash.

LiveMotion comes equipped with its own library of Photoshop filters, and in the future more add-on filters will be available, just as with Photoshop.

Dynamic behaviors, such as rollovers, can easily be created to enhance the look and feel of your graphics. It

Anyone familiar with Adobe products will have no difficulty catching on to LiveMotion's tool palettes, which are modelled on Illustrator and Photoshop.



(right) LiveMotion lets you create interactive buttons effortlessly simply by dragging and dropping objects and assigning an effect.

is even possible to define behaviors that trigger sounds, control a variety of animations, and launch complex interactivity.

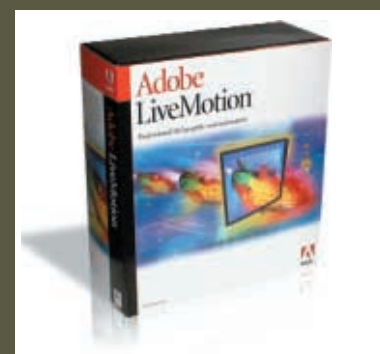
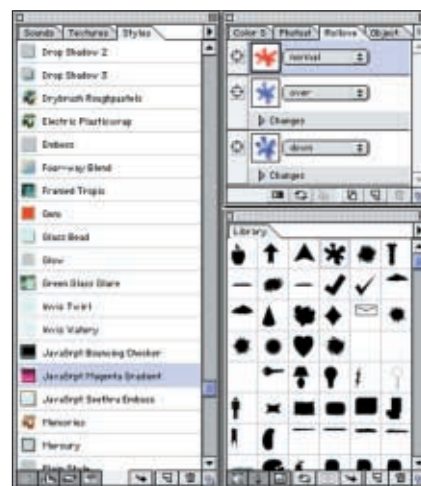
With a library of audio, images and preset effect templates, such as Javascript rollovers, animation commands, and Photoshop filters, even the most inexperienced web site designer can easily create an interactive web site. Drag-and-drop an object from the Library of images onto the work area, then select the preset effect of your choice from the Styles palette that has a rollover characteristic, and an interactive button has just been created.

Adding audio is also very simple. First, select the "Over" state (each layer represents a State value) in the Roll-over palette and select the desired sound effect from the Sounds palette. By dragging and dropping the sound onto the image in the "Over" state, the sound will be played when the mouse is placed over the image.

Animating objects over time is simple with the familiar Adobe AfterEffects-styled Timeline. Just set keyframes in the Timeline to easily animate each attribute of an object independently. If you change your mind, there's no need to start over — the LiveMotion object-oriented architecture makes it simple to edit attributes at any point in time during the design process.

EDITING IS SEAMLESS

LiveMotion even gives you control over the quality and file size of each individual object with Per-Object Compression, while Active Preview provides a live pre-



ADOBE LIVEMOTION 1.0

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Macintosh
PowerPC CPU and higher
OS 8.5, 8.5.1, 8.6, 9.0
64 MB RAM recommended (48 MB minimum)
100 MB disk space
CD-ROM drive

Windows

Pentium II CPU and higher
Windows 98, 2000, NT 4.0 SP4
64 MB RAM recommended (48 MB minimum)
100 MB disk space
CD-ROM drive

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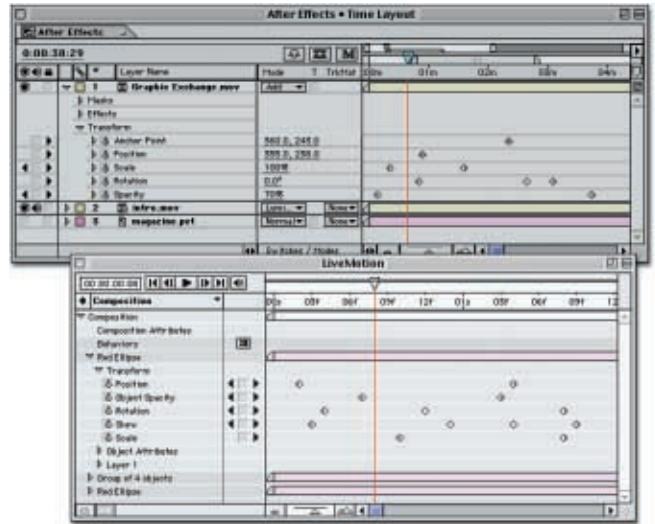
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Reviews



Animate objects in LiveMotion using a timeline dialog box which closely resembles Adobe AfterEffects, and edit your work at any time.

view of the optimization results.

Place Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop files directly in LiveMotion, and then edit the images in their native application with the "Edit Original" command. Any changes made with Illustrator or Photoshop will automatically update the image within LiveMotion. Layered Illustrator or Photoshop files can even be used as keyframe sequences for animation, as composite objects, or as a series of independent objects.

One edge which Flash currently has over LiveMotion is the ability to import and export using the QuickTime format. However the up-



coming release of Adobe GoLive 5 will include a new internal advanced QuickTime editor that allows for incorporating Flash files, so you will be able to capitalize on using interactive video with synchronized Flash animations.

With all these features and capabilities, plus lots more bundled into Adobe LiveMotion, Macromedia Flash has some tough competition to deal with (and to see how the two products stack up against each other, see Adobe's comparison chart at www.adobe.com/products/livemotion/lvmvsflash.html).

If you are contemplating producing Flash files for your Web site, LiveMotion is a very good bet, especially if you have a background in video production special effects and are well-versed with Adobe AfterEffects.

Adobe LiveMotion 1.0, priced at US\$299, is shipping now. Go to www.adobe.com/products/livemotion/main.html to get additional information. ■