

IMAGING & 3D

AUTO-ILLUSTRATOR

WHO ?

SIGNWAVE

WHAT ?

GENERATIVE ART DESIGNER

WHERE ?

WWW.AUTO-ILLUSTRATOR.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$99.95

WHAT ELSE ?

Is it a graphic design application or a work of art? Signwave describes Auto-Illustrator as “an experimental, semi-autonomous, generative software artwork and a fully functional vector graphic design application... Discover how easy it is to produce complex designs in an exciting and challenging environment that questions how contemporary software should behave.”

In spite of its artistic pretensions (and they are well-deserved: Auto-Illustrator is a bona fide work of art, winner of the 2001 Transmediale Artistic Software award, among others), Auto-Illustrator is fun to use and produces some interesting, if somewhat unpredictable graphic results.

Auto-Illustrator began life as “a parody of existing vector graphic design software,” but it soon became apparent that the software actually served a very useful purpose. As art, Auto-Illustrator is a means of expression for the authors of the application. The code is crafted to provoke the user; instead of a passive tool, you might think of working with Auto-Illustrator as a kind of creative conversation, a dialog between you and the unseen creators. Of course, this is true of every application, but Auto-Illustrator self-consciously exploits this relationship.

It's difficult to describe this software; it defies summarization and rewards exploration. The user experience is full of surprises, riddled with subtle (and not so subtle) nuances. For example, you may be greeted with a different message each time you launch the program, such as, “Are you nocturnal? Please configure the operating parameters,” or “Hey! Tell me more,” or “It's late! LET'S PLAY!”

Once you've created a new document, things look deceptively familiar. This could be almost any vector graphics program. Here's the document window, a Tool Palette, and several additional palettes. Everything looks normal, until you look closer. The Tool Palette includes a few tools you wouldn't expect, like the Bug Add tool, which places crawling bugs in your document. They continue to walk around your document, drawing lines as they go, continuing until they bump into other objects—or into each other, if you've added more than one—or get bored.

The Filters menu offers numerous fascinating options, grouped together under headings like Creative, Destructive, Inspirational, Degenerate, Generate, and Transform. There are collections of third-party plug-ins, like the Instant Mute Design, nq_297p, and SuckMyPixel plug-ins. There are whimsical plug-ins (like Stupid and Pointless, which offers a slider that adjusts between the two—a difficult choice), and serious plug-ins (like Architecture, which lets you build up surfaces and arrange them in three-dimensional space).

You can set numerous preferences for the program, though the results may not always be exactly what you expect. There are several tabs to choose from: General, Interface, Import, Grid, Alerts, and Psychosis, where you'll find options for Content judgment (Death penalty enabled for poor designs; I was afraid to check this one), Important (Don't push this button; DON'T push it—I did and I'm sorry), Not important (a Do cool things checkbox), and options for the mysterious and undocumented KJX Technology.

Auto-Illustrator allows you to record a sequence of actions and save it as an Automation, or you can use the Recording Tool, which records your document over time and saves the results to an AFX file. AFX is the format for Auto-Effects, another Signwave application that allows you to save your recording as a QuickTime or SWF (Flash) file. Auto-Effects only works in Classic, however.

Learning Auto-Illustrator might be overwhelming if playing with it wasn't so inviting—and rewarding. There's little in the way of documentation for Auto-Illustrator. The help files walk you through the Tool Palette options, and an FAQ offers more information. An Instant Tutorial option is available from the Filters menu. Selecting it seems to offer different guidance each time, things like: "1. Begin with some well balanced surfaces. . . 2. Enhance this with one or two oblique scribbles. . . , etc." If that doesn't help, you can always click the Do it for me button.

Unfortunately, Auto-Illustrator has one real drawback: It can be very computationally heavy, i.e., *slow*, even on the fastest Mac. Apply some filters and it may look like it's not responding, but give it time. Try Command-Period to cancel, or wait at least a few minutes before doing a Force Quit.

So is Auto-Illustrator a work of art or a graphic design application? Both—and more. I think it's a semi-serious serendipity generator. What do you think?

SO WHAT ?

Auto-Illustrator is a unique software program that invites a different kind of relationship between programmer and user. The result is a creative collaboration that is entertaining, provocative, useful, and (more than occasionally) beautiful.

AXELEDGE

WHO ?

MINDAVENUE

WHAT ?

3D WEB CONTENT CREATOR

WHERE ?

WWW.MINDAVENUE.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$950.00 FOR AXELEDGE, \$395.00 FOR AXELCORE (ENTRY-LEVEL EDITION)

WHAT ELSE ?

AXEL is an authoring application designed specifically for interactive, 3D Web content creation without the need for programming. AXELcore is the perfect solution for Web designers, creating engaging content that is relatively easy to develop and quick to download (using a small player that is downloaded automatically when a surfer views content for the first time). AXELedge adds complete character animation and scripting.

AXEL's interface is very clean and accessible. You'll find familiar modeling tools, a four-view modeling window (Top, Front, Right, and WebCam views), Project Manager (which lists everything in your project and makes selection easy), a Parameter Editor, an Interaction Editor (for linking sensors and reactions), and a Sequencer (animation timeline). The menus are arranged to roughly follow your workflow: Model, Relate, Visualize, Animate, Interact, and Publish.

You can apply materials and textures to objects to change their appearance, and render in one of three styles: shaded, wireframe, and a cartoon style that creates a 2D appearance resembling traditional cell animation. You can add shininess, glow, and transparency effects, even apply a QuickTime or Flash movie as a texture.

The Sequencer gives you complete control over your animation, including the streaming priorities of items in your project. You can animate most of the parameters of an object, including scale, rotation, position, transparency, and relationships. Animate points of an object's geometry to create morph effects. Create animations using keyframes, and you can record animations interactively by moving objects during playback. AXEL's Particle system lets you animate multiple

small objects, like rain, sparks, snowflakes, and bubbles.

The Interaction Editor allows you to drag and drop sensors and reactions to create complex interactions without any programming. A sensor is an event that triggers a reaction. You can add sensors to detect mouse events, proximity (an object moving close to another object), a position or orientation change in an object, a keyboard event, the completion of a download (like a sound file), or the passage of time. A reaction is the action that occurs in response to the sensor being triggered. Numerous reactions are possible with AXEL. You can play sounds or movies, change the properties of an object (like the material, position, scale, or orientation), link to another URL, or call a JavaScript. You can also create custom sensors and reactions.

You can preview your creation in AXEL's WebCam window, or in a browser. AXEL automatically generates the HTML code for a sample Web page. You can edit the code in any HTML editor or cut and paste the HTML code into an existing Web page. AXEL will estimate the time it takes to begin displaying your file, and to download the complete file. You can adjust how AXEL streams the various parts of your file to improve performance.

AXEL's interface is clean and friendly. It's one of the easiest 3D programs to find your way around in. It comes with thorough documentation, including a *Training* manual and *User Guide*.

SO WHAT ?

A friendly interface and powerful tools make AXELedge and AXELcore perhaps the easiest way for 3D designers to create and publish interactive 3D content on the Web.

BRYCE

WHO ?

COREL

WHAT ?

3D LANDSCAPER

WHERE ?

WWW.COREL.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$299

WHAT ELSE ?

Bryce is a 3D application for creating realistic landscapes and animations. Bryce 5 is the first major upgrade since Corel took over the application from MetaCreations, and some powerful new features make this longtime favorite a solid choice on OS X.



Bryce has one of the most unusual interfaces of any software application, and Corel has put some polish on the original (designed by Kai Krause) to make it more user-friendly. Unlike Vue d'Esprit's Windows-like interface (see page 56),

Bryce is platform-independent—it doesn't look like anything you've ever seen before. A thorough user manual, and several tutorials (some available on the Web), softens the learning curve.

When you launch Bryce, the Bryce environment takes over your screen, hiding the desktop (sliding your cursor to the top or bottom of the screen does reveal the menu bar and the Dock). This is awkward if you are a perpetual multitasker or if you're trying to follow one of the tutorials in a browser. There are so many options (and Bryce does such a good job of hiding them) that it takes a lot of poking around to find your way. But once you get used to Bryce's beautifully idiosyncratic interface, the 3D world becomes all-absorbing, and exploring and experimenting with the endless possibilities is outright fun.

You create your scene in a work area. Bryce doesn't have a standard split view, which shows four angles simultaneously. Instead, a view control lets you cycle quickly through all of the different angles, including a Camera View and a Director's View (which lets you view the scene, including the camera, from outside). There's also a Fly-around view, which sets your scene in motion. Dragging your mouse around changes the rotation so you can see your scene from all sides.

Like the workspace, switching to one of the editors (Bryce calls them "Labs") fills the whole screen with the interface for that editor. The Terrain Editor, redesigned in this version, is like a virtual desktop, allowing you to drag the Terrain Canvas, Preview, and Tools around freely (you can resize the canvas and preview windows to take better advantage of the desktop real estate). A Tree Lab lets you select from over 50 presets, then edit them for uniqueness (adjusting the trunk and branches, overall tree shape, and shape, distribution, and texture of the leaves or needles), or create your own purely fantastic foliage.

Two of the more outstanding features that are new to this version are Metaballs support and network rendering. Metaballs are objects that make it easy to create more organic looking shapes. Metaballs are spheres that blend into each other: The shape varies depending on the proximity of the spheres, and they can also be squashed or stretched for interesting effects.

Bryce is not known for having the fastest rendering, but if you have multiple computers connected to a network, Bryce will split the rendering of your file between the available machines. You don't need multiple licenses for Bryce, but

you do need to have either Bryce or Bryce Lightning (which comes with Bryce and can be installed on an unlimited number of computers on a local network) installed on each machine. Rendering 3D images and animations can be very time consuming and network rendering with Bryce Lightning can save both time and money.

Bryce renders spectacular images, and several new options (like Soft Shadows, Blurry Reflections, True Ambient Lighting, and Depth of Field) enable you to create incredibly realistic images. When you're done with your masterpiece, Bryce allows you to export to most common 3D file formats. You can also create a Web page from your image with links associated with objects in your scene. Bryce also exports to QuickTime movies, and QuickTime VR Panorama movies.

SO WHAT ?

Bryce is a powerful program with advanced features, bundled in a distinctive and engaging interface. Extensive presets, enhanced editing features, Metaballs support, and network rendering should ensure Bryce's continued popularity.

CANVAS

WHO ?

DENEBA

WHAT ?

MULTIPURPOSE GRAPHICS

WHERE ?

WWW.DENEBA.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$399.95 BOX, \$349.95 DOWNLOAD

WHAT ELSE ?

Canvas calls itself a “high-performance drawing environment,” but it’s much more than a drawing program. Canvas is an integrated, multipurpose graphics application. Combining vector illustration with image editing, page layout, animation, desktop presentations, and Web publishing, Canvas can handle just about any graphics challenge. And we’re talking a *big* box here, packed to the gills with four printed books and five CDs (containing more than 2,000 high quality fonts and 30,000 clip art images). In addition to a *Getting Started Guide*, a reference book for the clip art and fonts, and a *User’s Guide* that’s well over an inch thick, you’ll find a *New Features Guide* (and it takes more than a hundred pages to tell you what’s new).



With all that power under the hood, expect a steep learning curve before you're proficient with all of the tools and options. There are more than 20 palettes and the Toolbox has over 60 tools (there are no pre-assigned hotkeys, but you can add your own). Canvas tries to manage the options by letting you tear off palettes from the Toolbox, and you can dock palettes in a Docking bar that displays under the menu bar. A menu command will dock all open palettes and arrange them in the docking bar by name (but it docks the Toolbox as well, which you'd probably want to keep open, and it doesn't clean up palettes automatically—you have to select Clean Up periodically if you work with lots of palettes).

Canvas has some great drawing features. You can turn any object into a Guide Object by sending it to the guide layer. You can rotate the layout area so you don't have to tilt your head to work on rotated text or illustrations. A Snap option lets you draw with precision by snapping to other objects. A Smart Mouse palette lets you align objects precisely as you draw. Dimensioning tools help you create scale drawings, with accuracy to 0.5 microns.

Canvas is a full-featured paint program, too. A Camera tool lets you render any area of your document to a paint object. Then you can apply any of 45 photo effects (Canvas also supports Photoshop-compatible plug-ins). SpriteEffects let you apply effects to *any* object, including vector objects and text. A SpriteEffects palette lets you apply multiple effects, turn them on or off, reorder them, or crop the effects area, and then save your effects to make them easy to apply to other objects. You can also convert any vector object or text into a lens, then apply SpriteEffects to the area under the lens.

You can create and save design effects with the Sequences Palette. Canvas comes with a number of Sequences pre-installed. One of the advantages of Sequences is that you can save the steps to create a project and share the Sequence file, which is a fraction of the size of an image file. You can also learn a lot about the program by running Sequences (turn on the View User Interface option when you play them to pause the Sequence every time you would enter properties for an object). Canvas is also scriptable using AppleScript.

Canvas is a capable page layout application, supporting multiple master pages, linked text flow, and text on a curve. You'll also find some features to make working with text documents easier, including a font viewer that lets you preview fonts and formatting, a floating zoom slider, multiple rulers with different units of

measurement, and a searchable Document Layout palette. Pixel Mode lets you preview what your document will look like when rendered at 72 ppi (pixels per inch) on the Web, while remaining fully editable. Remember this when everything in a new publication looks pixilated—select Layout>Display>Pixel Mode to turn it on or off.

Canvas can create presentations and animations, but these tools won't replace a more dedicated program for serious work. AppleWorks has more transition effects. Animation documents are capable of creating GIF animations for publishing to the Web, but not much more.

SO WHAT ?

Canvas is a multi-talented program with an overflowing toolkit, making it an (almost) all-in-one graphics solution, and lots of extras mean there's a lot of bang in the box for your buck.

CAN COMBINE ICONS

WHO ?

INFINITY-TO-THE-POWER-OF-INFINITY

WHAT ?

ICON EDITOR

WHERE ?

HEM.PASSAGEN.SE/DARE/INDEX.HTML

HOW MUCH ?

\$5.00

WHAT ELSE ?

Can Combine Icons is a simple tool for creating great custom icons, even if you have no artistic talent! As the name suggests, Can Combine Icons creates custom icons by combining existing icons. You can create custom folders in a flash.

When you start the program, the application window opens with two “wells.” You drag the background icon (e.g., a folder) and drop it into the first well and the foreground icon (e.g., an application icon) into the second well. You can use any icon or add a graphic file by holding down the Option key and dragging the icon into the well. A third window displays the combination. You can select from a number of preset patterns, or you can make your own adjustments to the transparency, rotation, scaling, coloring, and placement of both icons. You can open an icon palette to select icons without having to search through the Finder. The palette includes icons for disks, folders, and symbols, or you can browse to any application and open the icons for that application. A text editor lets you add text to your icon. Select from any of your fonts, add an outline (and adjust the width and pattern for the outline), and a background color. When you’re finished, save the file as a desktop icon, ICNS file, or TIFF.

SO WHAT ?

Can Combine Icons is a simple utility for making custom icons by dragging and dropping your existing icons. It’s quick, it’s easy, and a great value for the icon enthusiast.

COREL GRAPHICS SUITE

WHO ?

COREL

WHAT ?

GRAPHICS SUITE

WHERE ?

WWW.COREL.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$549.00

WHAT ELSE ?

The Corel Graphics Suite is a generous collection of professional design tools for illustration and page layout (CorelDRAW), image editing and painting (Corel PHOTO-PAINT), and animation (Corel R.A.V.E.). Corel has established a reputation for value, and this Suite doesn't disappoint. Everything you need for your personal or professional design studio is included. The box is overflowing with extras, like CorelTRACE (for converting bitmaps into vector images), Canto Cumulus Desktop LE (for managing your digital media), and 2000 clip art images, over 500 stock photographs, and over 2000 TrueType and Type 1 fonts (along with a version of Font Reserve to manage all of them).

If you've worked with other graphics programs, you'll have no problem finding your way around Corel Graphics Suite. The tools and palettes will be familiar, and things work the way you'd expect. Corel also gives you a lot of control over the interface. You can save custom workspaces and customize keyboard shortcuts, color palettes, menus, toolbars, the property bar (which displays the settings for the currently selected object), the status bar, and effects filters.

Corel's color tools are also extremely flexible. A paint mixer allows you to select colors using color harmonies. You can superimpose a shape (like a triangle or pentagon) on a color wheel and each point will show you a complementary, contrasting, or harmonious color. You choose the color model (CMYK, RGB, HBS, etc.), and a palette below the color wheel displays variations (cooler; warmer; darker; lighter, etc.). This is a real aid for selecting colors for a project.

When you're ready to publish your documents, a Prepare for Service Bureau

Wizard will help you gather your files, and an integrated preflight engine will alert you to any problems. There are advanced options for publishing to PDF, including optimizing your file for the Web or for prepress. You can publish documents to the Web as HTML or Flash embedded as HTML, and a Web Image Optimizer lets you tweak your images and save them in GIF, JPEG, or PNG format. CorelDRAW does a good job of retaining your formatting when exporting to HTML, and has built-in FTP for uploading your pages.

CorelDRAW is the cornerstone of the Suite. It allows you to create multiple page documents, and a View Manager lets you save custom views to a palette, which gives you one-click access to any view on any page, a real timesaver in complex documents. A Page Sorter lets you view thumbnails of your pages, and you can drag and drop to rearrange them or change the size and orientation of individual pages. Compared to other illustration programs, CorelDRAW includes some advanced text tools, including a text editor, extensive formatting options, a spelling and grammar checker, thesaurus, and QuickCorrect (which automatically fixes errors as you type).

PHOTO-PAINT has many of the same features as CorelDRAW, and they share many tools (the interactive Drop Shadow tool is a favorite, allowing you to adjust your drop shadow by clicking and dragging). A new Undo/Redo palette tracks your actions. You can add text to a path, and both path and text remain editable. PHOTO-PAINT also now supports anti-aliasing of text, and QuickTime (you can edit individual QuickTime frames or QuickTime VR objects, even create QuickTime VR movies). And there's an abundance of effects, including photo effects (like red-eye, dust, and scratch removal), and a few KPT5 effects.

R.A.V.E. completes the trio. It's a capable animation program that will meet the needs of most users, and it's easy to learn. All of the basic animation tools are here: timeline, keyframes, tweening, rollovers, sound. You can export to GIF, Flash, and QuickTime. For more advanced features (like scripting), check out Adobe LiveMotion (see page 112).

SO WHAT ?

There's a lot to love in this package, and the combination of flexibility and power—along with lots of goodies in the box—makes this a great choice for someone outfitting a personal or professional design studio on a budget.

GRAPHIC CONVERTER

WHO ?

LEMKE SOFTWARE

WHAT ?

GRAPHIC UTILITY

WHERE ?

WWW.LEMKESOFT.COM/US_INDEX.HTML

HOW MUCH ?

\$35.00

WHAT ELSE ?

Forget about searching for the piece of freeware or shareware that handles a handful of different file types. GraphicConverter can import about 145 graphic file formats and export about 45 (but who's counting?). This makes it an indispensable utility, but GraphicConverter does much more than simply convert images (which, by the way, it can do in batches). It also offers a number of basic image editing functions (like crop, lasso, draw, and transparency) and effects, including brightness and contrast, color depth, rotate, sharpen edges, unsharp mask, gamma correction, red eye, vectorize, and a number of interesting color permutations (like Isothermal Involution).

Besides being able to handle so many different file formats, most users will find that GraphicConverter's most powerful features are the powerful batch conversion capabilities (you can apply several changes at once), and extensive AppleScript support.

The user manual is thorough and easy to follow. The interface lacks some of the aesthetic refinements of the better Aqua applications (there are remnants of its Classic days), but GraphicConverter is a solid graphics workhorse.

SO WHAT ?

For the ultimate graphics utility with all the basic functions you'll need, GraphicConverter is an incredibly versatile tool.

ICONBROWSER

WHO ?

THE ICONFACTORY

WHAT?

ICON MANAGER

WHERE ?

WWW.ICONFACTORY.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$20.00

WHAT ELSE ?

IconBrowser is a browser for Iconfactory's IconDropper, an application that allows you to customize your icons. IconDropper stores icons in sets called "packs," and IconBrowser allows you to view and manage IconDropper packs. Packs have the advantage of taking up less space and are less demanding on the Finder (the alternative is to have files for each icon).

Changing your icons with IconBrowser is as easy as copy and paste. First, open an icon pack in IconBrowser. Find the icon you want, highlight it, and copy it (hit Command-C). Now, find the file or folder whose icon you want to change and open the Get Info window (press Command-I). Make sure the little icon window is highlighted in the Get Info window, and paste the previously copied icon (Command-V). That's all there is to it.

IconDropper allows you to change icons with a single click, among other things. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, it wasn't available for OS X. IconBrowser, however, allows you to use icon packs created prior to OS X.

There are numerous Web sites dishing up custom icons for your Mac (and many of them distribute their icons in IconDropper packs), but none are quite as gorgeous as Iconfactory's freeware icon collection. You'll find three beautiful World of Aqua icon packs, along with the trial version of IconBrowser, on the CD-ROM.

SO WHAT ?

If you love custom icons, Iconfactory offers stunning freeware icons for OS X, and IconBrowser makes icon management a snap.

ILLUSTRATOR

WHO ?

ADOBE

WHAT ?

VECTOR GRAPHICS

WHERE ?

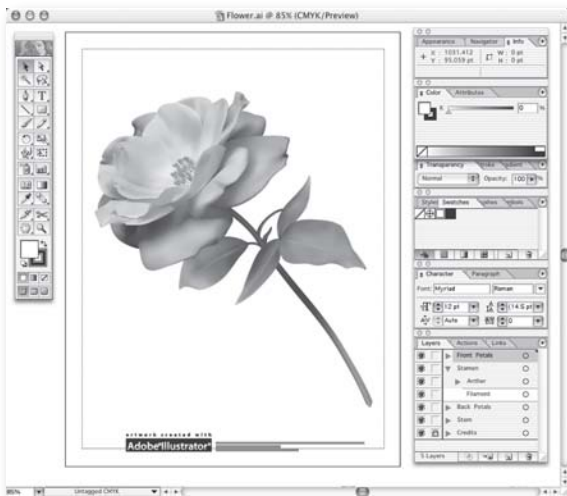
WWW.ADOBE.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$399

WHAT ELSE ?

Illustrator has long been one of the most popular applications on the Mac. A slew of new tools and enhancements in this version make Illustrator even more powerful and a pleasure to use.



The fun really begins with Illustrator's new warp effects, liquify tools, and symbolism tools. Symbols (master objects) help keep file sizes manageable by letting you create multiple instances of an object from a single master. The Symbols palette stores symbols so they can be shared across multiple documents. Adding multiple instances of a symbol is easy with the symbol sprayer tool. There are

seven other symbolism tools: shifter, scruncher, sizer, styler, screener (which changes the transparency of the symbols), stainer, and spinner. Swap symbols after you've applied changes, and the formatting is retained with the new symbol.

There are 15 preset warp effects, including arc effects, bulging, Flag, Wave, Fisheye, Inflate, Squeeze, and Twist. Selecting any of them from the Effects menu opens the Warp Options dialog. A drop menu lists all of the effects and they can be previewed in real time. You can also use the warp effects as envelopes, which allow you to distort objects by distorting the envelope. An envelope can be almost any object, a preset warp shape, or a mesh object using the Mesh tool. These tools are incredibly flexible for creating logotypes or adding dimension to a drawing.

The liquify tools are even more fluid than the warp effects. To apply a liquify effect, hold the mouse button down over an object until you're satisfied. There are seven liquify tools for creating warp, swirl, pucker, bloat, scallop, crystallize, and wrinkle effects. Adjusting various options in the Options dialog box can customize the tools to precision settings. Experimenting with them can lead to some very interesting results.

There are also new line and arc segment tools, and new rectangular and polar grid tools. Compound shapes are now live (the original shapes remain editable) and the Pathfinder palette has been redesigned. A new flare tool lets you create photorealistic lens flare effects and reflections. A new magic wand tool lets you select a range of objects with similar attributes, within a specified tolerance range of similarity. A new select menu makes it easy to select hidden objects, and save and load selections.

Illustrator now includes the essential tools for creating optimal Web graphics. Pixel preview lets you preview files as they'll be viewed on the Web. New object-based slicing automatically updates your slices as you edit or reposition elements. You can also create slices manually, so you adjust slices for a given area. Each individual slice can be optimized with different format and compression settings, and you can mix raster and vector formats in a single HTML table. Saving for the Web brings up a view where you can compare different, optimized formats.

SO WHAT ?

Fun new tools and numerous enhancements, along with OS X support, make this version of Illustrator a must-have upgrade.

IVIEW MEDIAPRO

WHO ?

IVIEW MULTIMEDIA

WHAT ?

MEDIA VIEWER & ORGANIZER

WHERE ?

WWW.IVIEW-MULTIMEDIA.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$90 BOX; \$50 DOWNLOAD

WHAT ELSE ?

iView MediaPro is similar to iPhoto in that you import media into a catalog, where you can view thumbnails of each image and perform basic edits (cropping and retouching). But iView picks up where iPhoto leaves off.

You can import files, folders, hard drives, or CD-ROMs into your catalog just by dragging and dropping them on the iView MediaPro icon, or into the MediaPro window. You can also choose a number of different import options to limit what gets imported. For example, you can choose to import only images, or images and audio files. iView supports over 100 different media formats, including photos, graphics, movies, audio files, and fonts. You can designate a Drop Folder and iView will prompt you when new items are added to the folder so you can add them to your catalog.

Three different views are available in the iView window, along with an Info panel that displays detailed information about the selected item. A Content view lists your files along with detailed information about name, size, creation date, and so on (you can select from numerous layout options that are available for each view). The Thumbnail view displays adjustable thumbnails of each item. You can view thumbnails even if the actual files aren't present (you can create a catalog for a CD-ROM, for example, and browse thumbnails without having the CD-ROM mounted). You can compress thumbnails to reduce the size of your catalog (by as much as 25-50%, which can be significant with large catalogs). Media view displays files at their full size. You can view and zoom in on images, play movies or sounds, preview fonts (character sets or sample text), browse the pages of a PDF file or view the individual layers of a Photoshop file.

iView allows you to annotate your files using predefined fields (the IPTC set used by the International Press and Telecommunications Council to facilitate the interchange of news data), as well as up to 16 custom fields. You can mark your files with one of eight custom labels. You can even add voice annotations and play them when you view your images in a slide show. Organize your files into Catalog Sets by dragging and dropping items, or generate sets automatically by folder names, categories, keywords, or authors. Search files by any criteria, including custom fields and sets (even search for images with a predominance of a single color or tone). iView can also convert images, movie files, and sound files, and supports most common formats.

iView gives you a lot of control over your slide show presentations. You can play a single audio file during the slide show or attach a voice annotation to each item. You can display multiple items on the screen at the same time by using a grid arrangement (you'll need a large screen and a fast computer for this, but it looks gorgeous on a Cinema Display). You can control timing and transitions, as well as several other display options. A catalog can run as a stand-alone slide show or save it as a QuickTime movie. iView's slide show features are the best I've seen.

iView offers several export options, including export to an HTML Gallery. iView includes several templates for formatting your pages, and iView offers additional templates on their Web site or you can create your own. You can also export files to contact sheets or to QuickTime movies.

SO WHAT ?

Complete digital media management capabilities—with outstanding organization, annotation, viewing, and export features—make iView MediaPro a bargain for home users and a must for professionals.

KNOCKOUT

WHO ?

PROCREATE

WHAT ?

MASKING TOOL

WHERE ?

WWW.PROCREATE.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$329.00

WHAT ELSE ?

If you've ever tried to separate a head of hair from the background in Photoshop, you know how difficult this can be. KnockOut simplifies this process, while giving you the tools to fine-tune the results. In addition to OS X compatibility, this version adds CMYK support, Touchup tools to help you fine-tune your mask, up to 99 levels of undo, a new property bar, and a revert file option.

You don't have to struggle to create a fine edge between foreground and background to knock out your image. With KnockOut, you draw an outline of the inside of the foreground object and another of the outside (thus defining the background), creating a transition area in the process. KnockOut processes the transition area to create the mask. Processing your image removes the background and stores the mask in an alpha channel. Additional tools help you edit the transition area to restore detail that got lost in processing or to remove stray pixels from the background.

KnockOut installs as a plug-in, so you'll need a host application to use it. You can use KnockOut with Photoshop, Corel PHOTO-PAINT (see page 38), or procreate's own Painter (see page 47). When you select KnockOut from the host application, the KnockOut workspace opens, looking like a modest graphics application, complete with toolbox, property bar, and info palette.

SO WHAT ?

KnockOut is a must-have application for anyone who needs to create precision masks.

PAINTER

WHO ?

PROCREATE

WHAT ?

NATURAL MEDIA PAINTING

WHERE ?

WWW.PROCREATE.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$479.00

WHAT ELSE ?

Painter is an amazing painting application. It simulates every imaginable natural media with an uncanny degree of realism. You can watch your watercolors soak into the paper and evaporate. Watercolor not your medium? Try any number of airbrushes, brushes, chalk, charcoal, crayons, F-X brushes (like Fairy Dust, Hair Spray, or Piano Keys), pastels, pencils, and pens.

There are several notable new features in this version, including Liquid Ink, new watercolor effects, enhanced color management (similar to those in Corel Graphics Suite on page 38—procreate is a subsidiary of Corel), text enhancements, perspective grids that help you create three-dimensional images, new effects (including Distress and Serigraphy effects), and several interface enhancements.

The new watercolor effects are amazing. You can control the wetness, pickup (how much dry dye gets picked up during diffusion), dry rate, evaporation threshold (the minimum amount of water that can still diffuse), diffusion amount (greater diffusion means softer edges), capillary factor (the effect of the grain on diffusion, which effects how rough the edges are), grain soak-in, and wind direction and force (which sets the direction of the diffusion). Are you getting the idea? Painter gives you fine control over the effects, and the results are surprisingly realistic. The Liquid Ink effects are equally impressive, with thick strokes that congeal and bind together, and lighting effects that give the illusion of depth.

Painter is compatible with Photoshop. You can save images to PSD format and imported Photoshop files retain their layers. You can now preview GIF and JPEG

images and adjust settings before saving for the Web. Painter also lets you slice images, and you can create image maps, JavaScript rollovers, 3D Web buttons, tiled backgrounds, and animated GIFs.

The workspace can be overwhelming. In addition to the usual Tools palette, you'll find palettes for Brushes and Brush Controls, Art Materials, Objects, Controls (which provide shortcuts to the basic settings for the currently selected brush or tool), and Color Set. The Brush Controls, Art Materials, and Objects palettes are expandable, and consist of several sections (for example, the Art Materials palette includes Papers, Colors, Gradients, Patterns, etc.). There are numerous sections within each palette so managing your options can be tricky. Painter *does* allow you to create new palettes, add items (including menu commands), and rearrange them to your liking, and when everything is just the way you want it you can save your workspace arrangement.

Painter is a complex program with virtually limitless settings and options. Fortunately, it comes with an excellent full-color manual and several tutorials by accomplished Painter artists (additional tutorials and tips are available on the procreate Web site). Painter is also scriptable, and you can learn a lot about the program by playing the included scripts. Hit Play to watch a picture appear miraculously before your eyes, or click the Step button to follow the creative process step-by-step.

SO WHAT ?

Painter is a digital artist's dream, and great fun regardless of your artistic talent. Painter makes you feel like a kid in an art supply store, and best of all, there's no mess to clean up.

PHOTOSTICKIES

WHO ?

CHRISTIAN GRUNENBERG

WHAT ?

IMAGING UTILITY

WHERE ?

HOME.ARCOR-ONLINE.DE/GRUNENBERG/

HOW MUCH ?

FREE

WHAT ELSE ?

PhotoStickies is a unique imaging utility that allows you to do a variety of things. It does some of things you'd expect from any imaging utility, like opening several common file formats and displaying slide shows.

PhotoStickies also does a few things you won't find in other imaging applications. You can stick multiple images to your screen, arrange them in layers, and keep them there. For example, you can set an image to be full screen wallpaper behind all other windows, an image to float like a normal window, and an image to remain on the top layer, above all other windows. The images are displayed without any borders. You can make them transparent by degrees, turn shadows on or off, and resize, rotate, and apply a number of filters to them. After altering a picture or set of pictures, you can save them as favorites.

PhotoStickies can open individual files, directories, or URLs. You can view webcam images (and keep them on top), even record them at specified intervals (and PhotoStickies can recognize when a new image is available so it doesn't record duplicates of the same image).

SO WHAT ?

Take Stickies to a new level with PhotoStickies.

SNAPZ PRO X

WHO ?

AMROSIA SOFTWARE

WHAT?

SCREEN CAPTURE

WHERE ?

WWW.AMBROSIAFW.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$29, \$49 WITH QUICKTIME CAPTURE

WHAT ELSE ?

Snapz Pro X is the ultimate screen capture tool for OS X. You can capture the full screen, any object, or any custom selection, and then save the captured image in any of several formats.

Snapz Pro is filled with options. You can send your pictures to the desktop, a folder in your Pictures directory, the clipboard, or directly to a printer. You can automatically save a thumbnail in a variety of different formats, add a watermark, change the palette, and add a border or drop shadow. You can change the File Creator settings for each image type, so the pictures will open with your favorite application for editing.

New in this version is a "Fatbits" tool that magnifies the pixels under your cursor, while displaying information about the location and size of your selection. This kind of precision control makes Snapz Pro indispensable for Web site design or desktop publishing.

If you upgrade to Snapz Pro X with movies, you can capture QuickTime movies of your screen. Snapz Pro can capture a fixed area, or follow your cursor. A smooth pan option makes the motion more even and allows the cursor to move within the capture window. If you have a Nvidia graphics card, you can capture DVD movies.

SO WHAT ?

Snapz Pro X is a powerful screen capture utility, offering the ultimate in flexibility and control.

TIFFANY

WHO ?

CAFFEINE SOFTWARE

WHAT ?

IMAGE PROCESSING

WHERE ?

WWW.CAFFEINESOFT.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$155 TO \$388 PROFESSIONAL, \$77 TO \$233 BASIC

WHAT ELSE ?

TIFFany is an image processing application, similar to Photoshop or Corel Photo-Paint, but with some innovative features. You'll also find a few extras when you install TIFFany, including PixelNhance (a free application for making quick image enhancements), Curator (a free image browser), and Cycles (a free CPU monitor).



TIFFany presents a different way of working with images based on Actions. Actions are ways of processing images. Apply them automatically with a click of

the mouse or manually by using the brush tool. You select Actions from an Action Catalog, a Finder-like Action browser that displays available Actions in a column view, complete with Toolbar and Action Shelf (where you can store your favorite Actions for quick access). A Preview drawer lets you preview the effect on your image (when you first select the Action, the Preview drawer switches between the before and after images). The drawer also displays detailed information about the Action, including Compositing options, Channel Filtering, and Intensity. Click on Settings to fine-tune the settings for an Action. Creating a new Action is as easy as creating a new file in the Finder: Just click on New Action, start from any of the built-in Actions (TIFFany includes over 500 preconfigured Actions, everything from brightness and sharpening to Heat Scale and Pond), and tweak the settings to your custom specifications.

TIFFany also allows you to create Process Actions, scripts that apply multiple Actions (like creating drop shadows) with a single click. Of course, you can do this in a number of applications, but what makes Process Actions great is the way you create them. You create Process Actions by dragging Action icons from the Action Catalog to the Action Inspector, where you can arrange them into a flow chart, which determines how the Actions are applied. You can click on any Action to customize the settings, then save the Action to the Action Catalog. You can export any Action or Process Action by dragging the icon to the Finder, or drag it to your email program to send it to a friend.

TIFFany allows you to apply Actions to batches of files automatically. Setting up batch processing is simple. Just drag the files from the Finder to the Document Manager, then select Actions from the Action Catalog and click Apply.

It may sound like TIFFany is all about Actions and, in a way, it is. But TIFFany also has all the features you'd expect in an imaging program, like marquees, layers, and inspector palettes, and complete control over colors, fonts, channels, and so on. And the power of TIFFany is wrapped in a beautiful package. TIFFany is a Cocoa application that takes full advantage of the Aqua interface (including the use of drawers, sheets, and Services), and offers some nice refinements (like a Save dialog that shows all unsaved documents when you quit, rather than having to save each one separately).

If you're used to working with any of the other popular image processing programs, it can be difficult to know where to start when you first open

TIFFany. The interface is polished, but it has a few quirks. For example, there's no Help menu. But don't panic! Fortunately, the program comes with excellent documentation, including a thorough tutorial and *User Guide* in PDF format or on the Web (where you'll also find some helpful hints). Like any good program, it's a lot of fun just to experiment with TIFFany, and you'll be greatly rewarded for your efforts.

SO WHAT ?

TIFFany is an image editor with innovative features, powerful capabilities, and a beautiful Cocoa interface, making it a standout graphics application.

TOON BOOM STUDIO

WHO ?

TOON BOOM TECHNOLOGIES

WHAT ?

CELL-BASED ANIMATION

WHERE ?

WWW.TOONBOOMSTUDIO.COM

HOW MUCH ?

\$374 BOX, \$349 DOWNLOAD

WHAT ELSE ?

Using tools that will be familiar to any traditional cartoonist, Toon Boom Studio makes it easy to create animations and publish them to the Web.

To create an animation you start by creating an Animation Set, which contains all of your media (drawings, graphics, sounds, etc.). You work on your project in one of two modes: Drawing mode (for creating your content), and Sceneplanning (for laying out scenes, animating elements, and creating camera moves). An animation project can consist of several scenes, and a Scene Manager helps you track scenes. Each scene has its own Stage and a Timeline, which makes working with larger projects more manageable.

Toon Boom Studio has the basic vector-based tools you need to create your drawings, and you can also import files from Illustrator, any format supported by QuickTime, or Flash SWF movies. You'll want to have a pen and tablet to draw in Toon Boom, but if you'd rather draw with paper and pencil you can always scan your drawings and Toon Boom will vectorize them on import.

Once you've created your main drawing elements, you can edit them in Drawing mode. An Exposure Sheet keeps track of all your elements, and lets you control what frames they're exposed in. An Auto Light Table feature allows you to see the layers underneath the layer you're working on, and an Onion Skin mode lets you view the previous and following drawings so you can reference them in the current cell.

The Sceneplanning mode displays a stage with three views: Camera View (which shows you what your animation will look like on export), and Top and Side Views (which help you arrange your objects in three-dimensional space). While Toon Boom is a 2D drawing program, you animate in 3D space. Looking at your scene in the Top or Side views you can arrange objects relative to the camera. Move them closer and they become bigger; move them away from the camera and they become smaller.

Animating in Toon Boom is similar to other animation programs. You use a timeline and keyframes to animate and transform elements. Pegs let you group elements so you can transform together. Toon Boom also has a Lip Synch feature, which helps you animate the mouth shapes of your characters. It analyses an imported audio file and displays thumbnails for each cell, showing the lip positions that mimic the sound. You can use the thumbnails as a reference when you draw your character.

When you're finished with your animation, you can export to QuickTime, iMovie 2 or Flash. Export to iMovie and add animations to your home movies, or video effects, transitions, and titles to your animations. Flash MX (which should be available by the time you read this), can import files directly from Toon Boom Studio.

While Toon Boom Studio is a Cocoa application with an attractive interface, it could use some tweaking. Creating loops in the Exposure Sheet can require tedious cutting and pasting. Floating palettes are untitled, which makes finding your way around a bit confusing, and they can't be nested to save space on your desktop. There are no hints or status bar to help you get started quickly. But these are minor flaws, the program is generally easy to use, and the excellent documentation and tutorial will have you creating animations in no time.

SO WHAT ?

Toon Boom Studio is a cartoonist's dream, and you don't have to be a professional to create entertaining animations and publish them to the Web.

VUE D'ESPRIT 4

WHO ?

E-ON SOFTWARE

WHAT ?

3D SCENERY MODELING

WHERE ?

WWW.E-ONSOFTWARE.COM

HOW MUCH ?

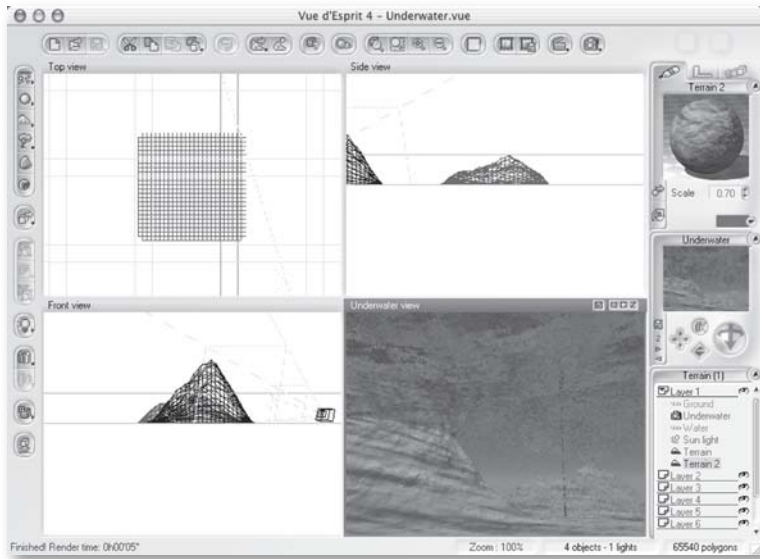
\$199.00

WHAT ELSE ?

Vue d'Esprit is a 3D application designed for creating natural scenery. One of the easiest 3D programs to use, it also includes advanced features, making it an ideal choice for both beginning and power users. Like many 3D modeling programs, Vue d'Esprit has its own stylized interface. Once you get past the Windows-like interface, you'll find it's friendlier than Corel's Bryce (see page 31).

When you create a new document in Vue d'Esprit, you start by selecting an atmosphere for your scene. You can select from several preset collections, including Daytime, Simple Sunset, Bad Weather, Realistic Sunset, Volumetric, Unusual (try Busy Sepia Aliens, Propane Blue, or Purple Creep), and Animated. Vue d'Esprit comes packed with presets. There are over 250 fully textured models of everything from animals to vehicles. You can quick start your scene with one of over a hundred atmospheres, choose from over 100 cloud shapes, and apply any of over 300 materials. Of course, you can customize everything. The possibilities truly are limitless.

After loading your atmosphere, you view your document in a 4-view layout (top, front, side, and main camera views), which makes it little bit easier to visualize the three dimensional space. Creating objects automatically adds them to the World Browser. You can organize objects on different layers or select several objects and adjust their parameters simultaneously. You can drag them around to group or ungroup them, or to create Boolean objects. Selecting an object will center it in the 3D views, which makes it easier to find your way inside a complex scene.



One of the unique features of Vue d'Esprit is the SolidGrowth vegetation system. The program includes several presets (from a Patch of Grass to an Umbrella Acacia, and more are available on the e-on Web site). When you add multiple vegetations of the same species, they grow at random following the characteristics of that species. In other words, every time you click to add another Clivia or Fir Tree, a unique object is created. You can also select an object and use the Scatter/ Replicate Objects dialog to automatically make multiple copies of the object while simultaneously moving, resizing, rotating, and twisting them. A Drop Objects button drops objects on the closest object beneath, a quick way to ground any wayward Aralias.

Adding terrains is as simple as painting on a terrain map. Starting with a preset, you click on the terrain to raise, dig, erode, or apply effects (like craters, cracks, grit, gravel, pebbles, peaks, and stairs). Vue d'Esprit updates your changes in real time.

A Mover Wizard walks you through the steps as you create an animation. After selecting an object, you choose a type of motion, repeat mode, main axis, and speed mode. Then you create your path and preview the motion. When you're

finished with the Wizard, you can create a preview in the timeline or render your final animation.

There's no network rendering support in Vue d'Esprit, but if you have multiple computers on a network, each with a licensed copy of the software, you can set them to render alternate frames. When the rendering is complete, you can transfer the files to one computer and assemble them into your final animation.

Vue d'Esprit includes excellent documentation. The manual opens with a Kick Start tutorial, and numerous tutorials at the back of the manual lead you step by step through all of the key functions, to building a complete scene and an animation. Even if you're a 3D newbie, you'll find yourself creating some stunning scenes in (almost) no time.

SO WHAT ?

A generous collection of presets, user-friendly interface, great documentation, gorgeous rendering, and advanced features make Vue d'Esprit a bargain for beginning and advanced 3D artists.