



DigitalArts

The world's biggest creative design & technology magazine

LIVE THE DREAM

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CREATIVE CAREER ON TRACK AND LOVE THE JOB YOU DO



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Motion-graphics artist Angie Taylor shows how to use the clone stamp tool in AE to paint on moving footage



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SWEENEY TODD TITLE FX

Blood & gore movie titles
The making of the eerie titles for Tim Burton's new gore fest



FREE MONEY FOR DESIGN!

Creative funding guide
Where to find financial help and funding for your design studio

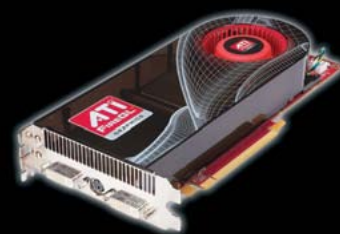


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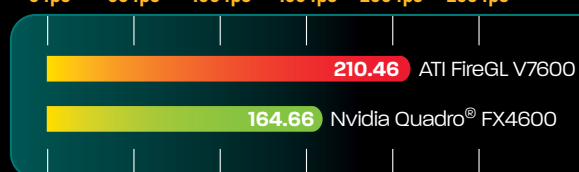


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*SPECviewperf® 10 Maya (maya-02) viewset benchmark data courtesy of www.tomshardware.com, November, 2007.

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This month's cover illustration is by Vault49, www.vault49.com

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WORLD LEADERS IN IT PUBLISHING



welcome



While not in the same league as nursing or teaching, design is considered by many to be a vocational career. Designers choose to work in the creative industry for the love of simply being, well, creative, so the argument goes.

Things such as money, acclaim and career growth are often seen as incidental when designers start out – the dessert to design's main course.

Cold reality, though, is often disappointing. Boring, bread-&-butter work of corporate brochures, identikit Web site creation, and endless Photoshop cutouts can quickly become the norm. Sure, they pay the bills and keep the wolf from your door, but is that actually what you signed up for when you heard your creative calling? Our *Live the Creative Dream* feature on page 22 reveals how you can cast off the crushing elements of design and work on projects that reignite the creative spark and passion we all feel when working on something we love.

Of course, money is a necessary evil for even the most carefree of designer, so this issue we've also found out how you can get creative funding for your work or newly established creative studio. Find out how on page 32.

If you're still stuck for inspiration, then check out the latest creative offerings from our readers on page 18. You can also follow along with our great tutorials starting on page 44, covering some cracking Photoshop, Illustrator and After Effects techniques.

So, rediscover your passion for design, get your career back on track and you too can live the creative dream.



Lynn Wright
editor

DigitalArts

Digital Arts delivers authoritative creative advice that directly impacts on you as a designer. Digital Arts covers design, visual effects, video, interactive, 3D, and animation, and our tutorials are sourced from leading creative practitioners. Digital Arts is the leading reviews magazine, and reviews more creative products than any other UK monthly magazine.

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ON THIS MONTH'S DIGITAL ARTS CD

Animation showcase

FLIP ANIMATION FESTIVAL

Over an hour of the best animated short films and installation artworks from the recent West Midlands-based festival

Photoshop video tutorials

Three sessions from Talented Pixie's new advanced art-&-design training DVD set

18 high-resolution photos

Digital Arts and Shutterstock have teamed up to bring you 18 royalty-free images that can be used up to A4

Behind the *Tales Of The Riverbank*

A video on how the VFX were created

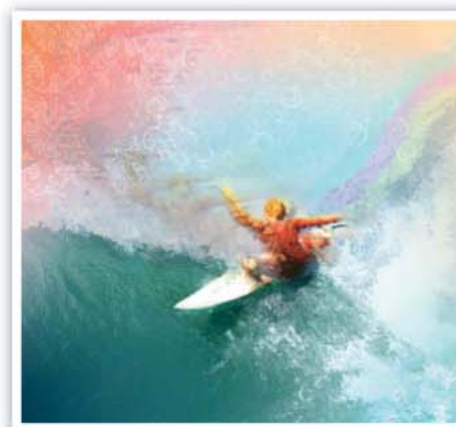
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Tutorial files on CD!

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UK film production enjoys another strong year

Film production and cinema-going chalked up a good performance for 2007, but was no match for the bumper year of 2006. But, warns UK Film Council CEO John Woodward, things may not be so rosy for the year ahead...

 The amount of money spent on making films in the UK in 2007, including *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, and *Sweeney Todd* totalled £723 million, according to figures released by the UK Film Council.

British cinema enjoyed a strong year too, with £904 million taken at the box office, up eight per cent on 2006. British films performed well at the box office, accounting for 28 per cent of takings, up from 19 per cent in 2006.

Production spending in 2007 totalled £722.9 million. That figure was down on 2006's total of £855 million, however, with the fall attributed to the weak dollar, the US writers' strike, and new tax credits on co-productions.

Based on films with production budgets of more than £500,000, the figures cover the UK spend of indigenous UK film production, inward investment productions, inward co-productions, and UK co-productions filmed in the UK and abroad using UK crew and expertise.

The statistics show that the UK

was involved in the production of 58 UK feature films (up from 54 in 2006), 26 inward investment films (28 in 2006) and 28 UK co-productions (53 in 2006).

Inward investment from international filmmakers, such as Hollywood studios locating productions in the UK, was down by 13.9 per cent but still brought

On the production front 2008 is set to be a tougher year but UK filmmakers have the skills and creativity to ride it out

£508 million into the economy. Inward investment films included *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*; *Sweeney Todd*; *The Dark Knight*; and *The Young Victoria* starring Emily Blunt and Rupert Friend. The highest grossing film of 2007 was *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, taking £49 million, followed by *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, with £40 million.

A wider range of films proved popular with film fans this year,

including *The Lives of Others* (£2.68m), *La Vie En Rose* (£1.58m), *Tell No One* (£1.19m) and *The Curse of the Golden Flower* (£1.16m).

John Woodward, CEO of the UK Film Council, said: "2007 was a strong year for film production in the UK and better than everyone was predicting this time last year. While the figures are slightly

down on 2006's spectacular performance, we have to take into account that 2006 was an exceptional year.

"The UK has yet again shown its strength by making both the bigger-budget commercial films alongside smaller, equally powerful films that challenge and inspire audiences and win awards all over the world," he added. "We've been affected by the weak dollar and the bedding-down of the structure of the new tax credit for

the different types of film being produced in the UK.

"As a result, last year saw a significant drop in co-production activity. Some of this was expected given that the tax break is geared towards encouraging only shooting and post-production in the UK. However, we will be looking at this in more detail as part of a study the Government has asked us to undertake with regard to the state of the industry following the introduction of the new tax credits.


"2008 should prove to be another strong year for UK films at the box office with the new *Bond*, *Harry Potter*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, and *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People* all due for release over the next twelve months.

"On the production front 2008 is set to be a tougher year with the US writers' strike continuing to have an impact and a possible US actors' strike but, thanks to the skills and creativity of our film-making talent we are in a good place to ride it out," he added.



VTR buys Machine Effects for £2m

Indian-backed VTR boosts its VFX capabilities with new acquisition in London market

 VTR (Prime Focus UK) has acquired visual-effects house Machine Effects Limited for more than £2 million. The acquisition further strengthens VTR's position in the UK visual-effects market and continues the international expansion of VTR's parent company, Prime Focus Limited – India's largest post-production and visual-effects services facility.

Founded by John Lockwood and Steve Street, Machine Effects Limited provides a full range of services to film and broadcast. Recent feature film credits include *Fred Claus*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Both



Lockwood and Street will remain with the business.

Namit Malhotra, chairman of VTR and Prime Focus Group (pictured above), said: "This acquisition adds to the group's

global breadth, strengthening our visual-effects capabilities and helping to grow our offer. Machine Effects is a strong brand with an impressive track record in the industry and I am pleased that it will be joining VTR and in turn part of the growing group of companies in the Prime Focus Group."

With six facilities in India and now five in London, the Indian post-production giant made a move into the US and Canada last November with the purchase of Post Logic Studios and Frantic Films VFX. The move saw Prime Focus acquire 200 new workers and offices at the heart of the US filmmaking industry in Hollywood.

The V&A's spring exhibition, *China Design Now*, takes a look at the recent explosion of new design in China, from the 2008 Olympic stadium to the cutting-edge work by fashion and graphic designers. It will display the work of Chinese and international designers, focusing on architecture, fashion, youth culture and graphics as well as film, photography, product and furniture design and digital media. The exhibition opens March 15 and runs until July 13, 2008. www.vam.ac.uk



Red Bee Media's new brand identity for BBC Three positions the channel as a multiplatform entertainment hub for the young. The new look introduces a vibrant world and characters alongside a new logo, colour palette and graphic system. The brand has been created to give a seamless experience across TV, Internet and mobile platforms. Nexus Productions produced and animated six idents, six stings, and three promo openers, as well as supplying additional Web design. www.nexusproductions.com



Apple has released the MacBook Air, a laptop that the company is billing the world's thinnest – small enough to fit inside an A4 envelope. Priced starting at £1,020 plus VAT, it sports a silvery finish, a 13.3-inch LED-backlit widescreen display and an optional 64GB solid state disk drive. MacBook Air comes with an 80GB drive, as well as 2GB of RAM and a Core 2 Duo processor.

www.apple.com/uk



Version2's Micah Scarpelli has created a cool spot for Smirnoff North, a new blend of vodka, that melds live action with CG and VFX. The spot shows a snowy paradise with glaciers, ice, and blue water that's suddenly transformed into a cocktail glass full of the vodka.

"To create the iceberg we used 3D and live action; match-modelling it to a high-res image and then rendering as many different layers," says Version2's Kieran Walsh. "For the ice that falls away from the berg, we projected live action onto the 3D geometry," he adds. The spray was generated with particles in After Effects and live-action birds were shot on bluescreen. www.version2.net

Canon has expanded its high-definition camcorder range with two flash memory-based models. The HF10 features a new dual flash-memory system, while the HF100 can shoot directly to memory card.

Canon says that the HF models feature hard-disk drives, extended recording times, and are more compact than DVD camcorders. Canon says the camcorders provide superb image quality, comparable with the standard set by HDV. The HF10 and HF100 models are the first HD camcorders from Canon to record at 1,920-x-1,080 resolution.

Canon says that flash-based memory is more power-efficient and robust than other recording media, resulting in

smaller, lighter HD camcorder designs. The HF10 and HF100 weigh in at approximately 380g, says Canon.

Both camcorders record to standard SD or SDHC memory cards, and the HF10 has 16GB of internal memory. Using the internal flash memory and an optional 16GB SDHC card it can store over 12 hours of HD footage. The models feature a 12x optical zoom Canon HD Video Lens with Super Range Optical Image Stabilizer (OIS), and a 3.3-megapixel sensor with a DIGIC DV II image processor. Prices are to be announced.





Asylum has created over 700 seamless VFX shots for Walt Disney's *National Treasure: Book of Secrets* using a multitude of techniques including photo-real CG, matte painting, compositing, and roto.



CorelDraw X4 packs in features

Live text formatting and font-detecting tools lead features charge for graphics tool

Corel has unveiled a new version of its CorelDraw Graphics Suite. The X4 release includes over 50 new or enhanced features, according to the company. Heading the new feature list is live text-formatting, which previews text options, such as font, font size and alignment, before applying them to a document.

The software now integrates with WhatTheFont, a font finding service from MyFonts.com. It identifies the font used in existing bitmap designs, artwork or other images received from clients.

Layers can now be controlled and edited independently for each page of a document, and guidelines can be added for individual pages and master

guidelines for an entire document.

A new, interactive table tool can create and import tables to provide a structured layout for text and graphics. Tables can be aligned, resized, and edited.

Corel says that the application is the only professional graphics package officially certified for Windows Vista. The software integrates with the desktop search capabilities in Windows Vista, allowing files to be searched by author, subject, file type, date, keywords, or other file properties. Keywords, ratings or other notes can be added when saving files.

Corel has added a group workflow tool, dubbed ConceptShare, that integrates an online collaboration tool directly into the design workflow.

ConceptShare shares designs and ideas with other users in real time, says Corel.

The included Corel Photo-Paint photo-editing software gains support for RAW camera file formats, enabling users to import RAW camera files directly from their digital camera. With support for around 300 different camera types and interactive controls that provide real-time previews, users can view file properties and camera settings, adjust image colour and tone, and improve image quality from within Corel Photo-Paint X4 and CorelDraw X4. CorelDraw Graphics Suite X4 costs £329 plus VAT, £149 plus VAT for an upgrade from an earlier version. www.corel.co.uk

Framestore takes second bite of Primeval

Hit ITV show *Primeval* returns to UK TV this month with a host of new prehistoric creatures courtesy of Framestore CFC.

The VFX and animation studio supplied seven new CG creatures seen in some 350 shots, as well as a further 350 VFX and CG enhancements. Around 100 people worked over a period of nine months to bring the bestiary to life.

"For this series I wanted more animated faces," says VFX supervisor Christian Manz. "For something like the sabre-tooth tiger viewers expect to see something with more mobile features and a greater range of expression."

Creature work was done in Maya, rendered in Mental Ray and composited in Shake. www.framestore-cfc.com

OnOne's Liquid assets

OnOne is to create a Photoshop plug-in based on a 'groundbreaking' image-resizing technique. A free public beta of Liquid Resize for both Windows and Mac OS X is available now as a standalone application from the onOne Software Web site. A Photoshop plug-in version is slated for a summer release. www.ononesoftware.com

Sony adds to HD range

Sony has launched new high-definition AVCHD HDD camcorder models. The AVCHD HDD range supports up to 120GB of hard disk in the HDR-SR12E. The models also feature a 16Mbps full-HD picture-quality mode, up to 10-megapixel resolution still-image capture, face detection and D-Range Optimiser for shooting, plus Xtra Fine LCD for viewing.

The AVCHD DVD can archive HD recordings onto compact 8cm DVD discs and removable Memory Stick. Recording time is extended to almost seven hours with dual layer disc and the new 16GB Memory Stick. In addition, the UX19E (pictured) features Hybrid Plus technology, which records another three hours to its 8GB internal memory. www.sony.com



Gridiron goes with Flow

Gridiron Software has announced Gridiron Flow, new digital content management software for graphic design, Web, and video projects. Flow tracks the design process from start to finish, and manages assets and applications. It automatically tracks workflows by recording all Import/Export, Save/Save As, and Copy/Paste actions in a project, says Gridiron. It understands file formats for the majority of creative applications and maintains all relationships between assets, says the company. Pricing has yet to be announced. www.gridironsoftware.com





Canon debuts EOS 450D

New SLR melds lightweight body with 12.2mp CMOS sensor

Canon's new EOS 450D digital SLR features a 12.2-megapixel CMOS sensor, EOS Integrated Cleaning System, a 3.0-inch LCD with Live View mode and a new 9-point AF system.

Like Canon's EOS-1 series of cameras, the EOS 450D features a DIGIC III image processor and a redesigned menu system with features such as direct control of Speedlite flash units from the camera LCD. The EOS 450D captures up to 3.5 frames per second for a continuous burst of up to 53 large JPEG images.

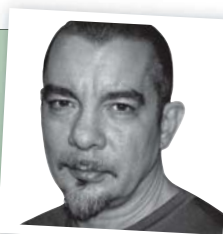
Compact in size, the new SLR weighs less than 475g and features

an improved, more comfortable grip, says Canon. A large, bright viewfinder makes image composition clearer and the menu system uses a simplified tab structure that avoids scrolling.

The viewfinder displays key exposure information including ISO speed and spot metering for greater control over exposure in tricky lighting conditions.

A new high-capacity battery extends shooting time on a single charge to a maximum of 500 shots, says Canon. The EOS 450D is compatible with over 60 EF/EF-S lenses and all EX Series Speedlite flash units.

Top British designer and art director, Neville Brody will design this year's *D&AD Annual*. Published in September, it showcases the work of leading advertising and design creatives selected by the 300 judges of the D&AD Awards. www.dand.org



Concrete posts first Red One filmed video

Post production house Concrete worked with Axis Films to create a video for G4 front man, Jonathan Ansell's debut new single entitled *Now we are free*.

Directed by Stuart Gosling, the video was edited by Guy Morley, senior editor at Concrete with visual effects added by David Cox.

The video was shot using the Red One digital cinema camera and production took place at London's historic Coronet Cinema.

The 4K and 2K files from the

camera were 'digitally developed' by Concrete, who then provided standard definition clips for the offline process and full quality files for the final online and colour grade, which took place within one of Concrete's Mistika HD suites. www.concretepost.co.uk



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Rising in the East

There's no doubt about it: 2008 is China's year. Corbis is celebrating this fact with its new collection, *Chinese Up-and-Comers*. The collection features 18 portraits of leading actors, designers, directors and artists, including some of the country's best-known international stars. Subjects include actresses Zhang Ziyi (*House of the Flying Daggers*; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) and Maggie Cheung (*Hero*; *Memoirs of a Geisha*), as well as fashion designer Lu Kun, film director Ringo Lam and singer Louis Koo. If the names aren't familiar yet, they soon will be.

www.corbis.com



Through the lens of a fast food nation

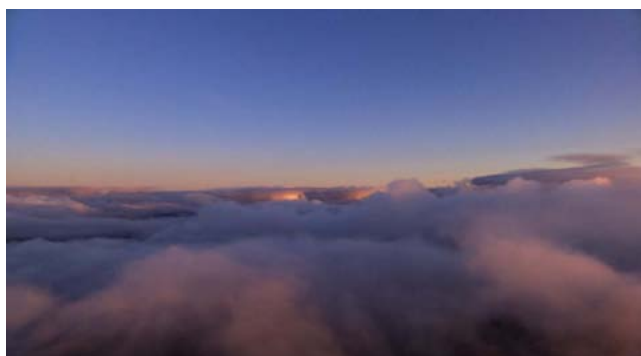
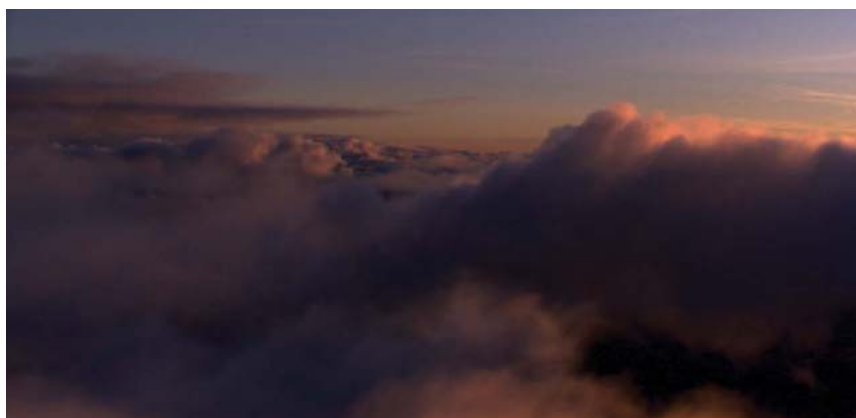
Unhealthy snacking is the subject of the new collection *Junk Food* from Image Source. The 100-image offering from photographer Leonard Pine is composed of artery-clogging favourites such as burgers, Chinese takeaway and English breakfasts – all in such tight focus that you can see the grease glisten. The complete collection is £599.

www.imagesource.com



Mammoth in motion

High-density specialist Mammoth has launched a dedicated library of 3D motion graphic clips, including galleries of water patterns, the planet, and abstract forms. The clips are looped for continuous play. www.mammothhd.com



Up, up and away

Artbeats has released four new collections of royalty-free, high-density footage, offering an extensive choice of skylscapes shot at almost every hour of the day. The collections include sunrises, sunsets, unusual camera angles and bird's-eye footage of America. Prices for HD collections start at \$799 (approximately £405). www.artbeats.com



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DAN MUMFORD

Dan Mumford is a freelance designer and illustrator represented by London agency Jelly.

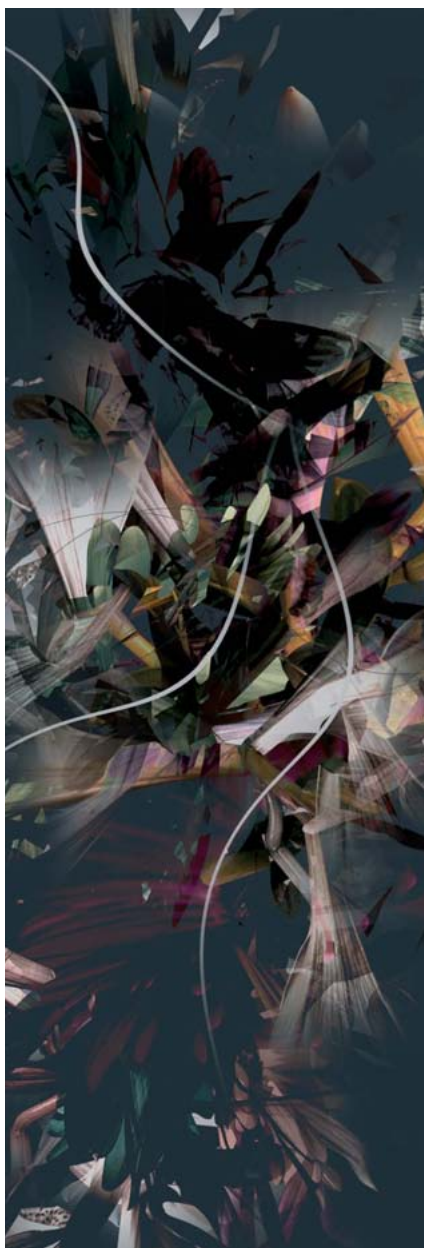
His work includes screen-printed T-shirt designs for Drop Dead Clothing, and work for bands such as The Gallows, The Plight and "many, many bands and small labels".

He combines hand-drawn images with Photoshop colouring, and has recently started using a graphics tablet. "I enjoy trying to make work as detailed as I can, to the point where people are slightly confused how you did it," he says. "I also like pens."

e: fightingstarlight@hotmail.com

w: www.dan-mumford.com





ROBERTO MARRAS

Artist and designer Roberto Marras is from Sardinia, but studied in London, and still lives there. His vivid, intense compositions are influenced by abstract expressionism and surrealism; he creates them in Photoshop.

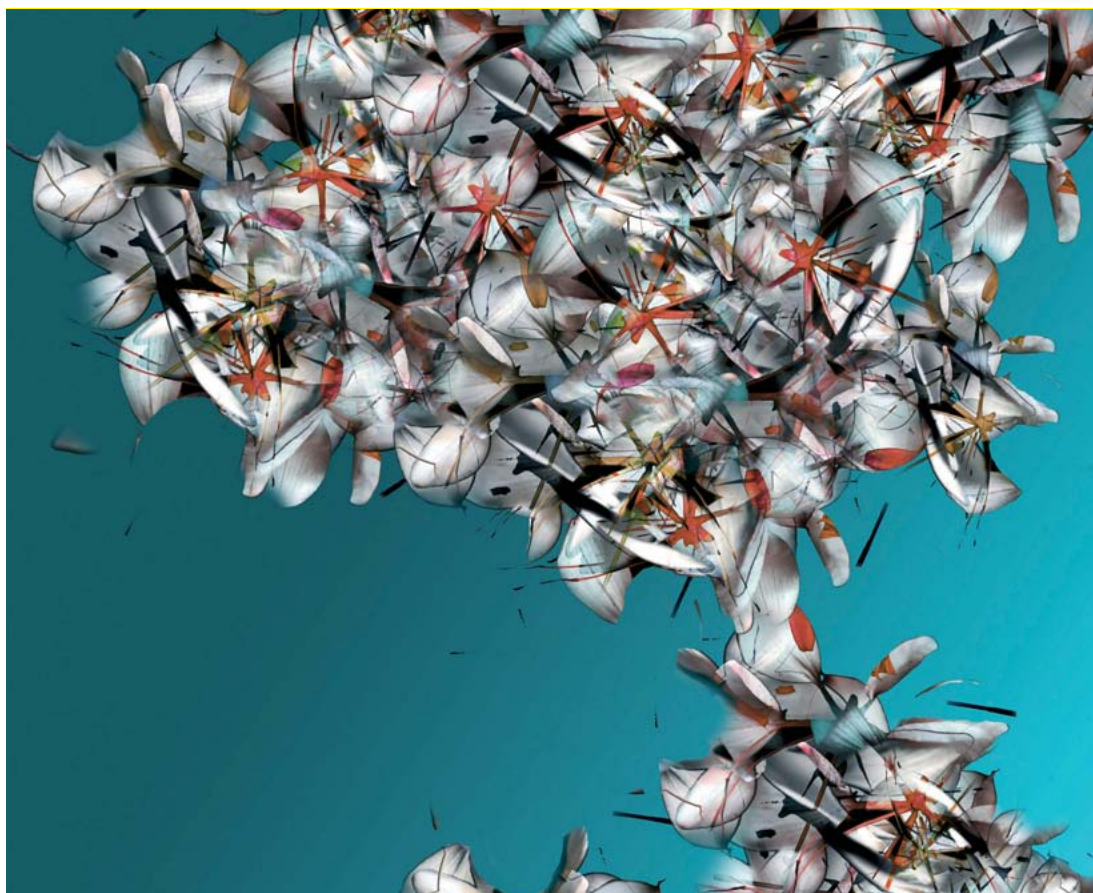
"Although I am inspired by what I see around me," he says,

"I question whether reality is what we see around ourselves or our interpretation of it."

Roberto works as an art director for marketing agency MRM Worldwide, whose clients include Sky, L'Oréal and Intel.

e: roberto@robertomarras.com

w: www.flickr.com/photos



BEN JAVENS

For Ben Javens, studying fine art at UCE Birmingham was an odd experience: he developed a "love-hate relationship" with art that he says continues to inspire him and infect his work to this day.

It wasn't until he graduated, bought a computer and joined Outcrowd Collective that he felt grounded in his work. He says: "It re-ignited my passion and forced me out of the creative void of graduation. The computer gave me a totally new perspective."

His work mixes analogue and digital techniques: "Most things are born out of making marks on paper first and then manipulating them using Photoshop and Illustrator."

Ben has exhibited both solo and as part of Outcrowd Collective, and has worked on several projects for record label Static Caravan.

e: mrben75uk@yahoo.co.uk

w: www.outcrowdcollective.com



showcase



VERONIQUE STOHRER

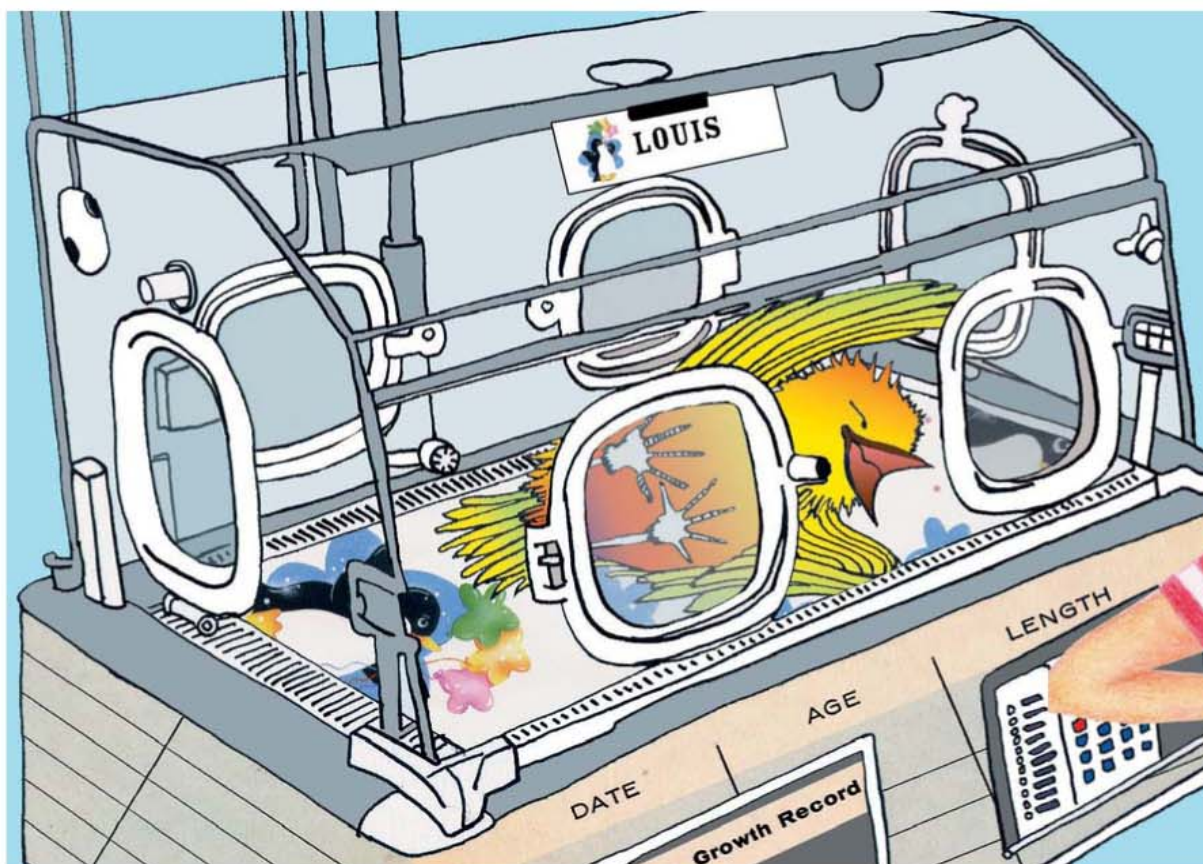
Veronique Stohrer is a freelance illustrator from Stuttgart, Germany, with a degree in graphic design. This background in graphic design continues to have an impact on her illustrations. Her whimsical style blends drawing, sewing, collage and many other techniques, as well as Photoshop, Freehand and InDesign.

"I am always led by my emotions," she says. "The main idea is to connect traditional materials with new forms of graphic and illustration. To combine what you wouldn't combine, to juxtapose materials, but without forcing them, and to communicate with colour and line."

Veronique finds inspiration almost everywhere: "Old magazines, photography, nature, antiques, supermarkets, Asia, my grandmother's attic, old porcelain..." One of her biggest influences, she says, is her parents. "I got all my creativity from them."

She is represented by the Jutta Friche illustration agency, and her work has appeared in a variety of magazines and publications.

e: info@veronique-stohrer.com
w: www.veronique-stohrer.com





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words Sean Ashcraft illustration Vault49 Photography Michael Creagh at Vault49

LIVING THE DREAM

What are your goals? Are they within reach or light years away, and how can you make them happen? *Digital Arts* talks to leading creatives about how they got set for success.

 We analyze, manage and plan almost every area of our lives. Relationships, finances, family and leisure time all receive considered attention, yet one area is curiously – sometimes disastrously – neglected. Work hogs two-thirds of our time on Earth, so why do so many of us drift from post to post, following a crazy paving career path that’s rarely fulfilling, and frequently frustrating?

Since design is, in part, vocational, the student designer should have a far clearer notion of what he or she would like the future to hold than, say, a history or philosophy undergraduate. The reality, however, is that designers can drift aimlessly from first job to carriage clock presentation as readily as anyone else. Some may even drift to the top, earning a pretty wedge as they go, yet still remain creatively unfulfilled. Far more will hopscotch through the industry, on a never-ending quest for creative nirvana.

According to one theory, the secret to a happy career – whether in design or anything else – is to find your ‘red thread’: the thing that motivates you

above all else. The notion of designers finding this motivating factor was recently examined in a *Digital Arts* blog (tinyurl.com/35oes3) by Huey Nhan, a production director at London-based creative agency Digital Outlook.

Nhan believes that the red thread can be as broad as “making things that people love, or helping others achieve their potential... A good creative would surely have a bit of the former, and a good manager will always have a bit of the latter.”

Whatever the exact characteristics of a designer’s personal red thread, Nhan believes that the principle itself is essential. “The most passionate, successful and, ultimately, fulfilled people will stick steadfastly to their purpose, whatever they do.”

This approach has helped Peter Tennent achieve his creative goal. He runs Factory Design (www.factorydesign.co.uk), a product design agency. “My red thread is to run a successful design agency, and sustain it for the next generation, while remaining recognizable to my wife and children when I walk through the front door.”

But of course, life is rarely simple, and what motivates us can shift over time. US-based Mike Tunney, an art director with OgilvyOne (www.ogilvy.com), a top interactive agency, says his red thread has changed over the years. “After college, I wanted to do the most creative work for the coolest clients, but over time I’ve realized this isn’t always going to be the case. Since then, I’ve tried to create work that’s rewarding for myself, but also equally rewarding for my clients.”

Helen Rice and Josh Nissenboim started their design studio Fuzzco (www.fuzzco.com) in Charleston, US, in 2005. The pair says their creative drive comes from “being playful and young whenever we are allowed”, adding that “we have a lot of interests outside of design that influence our work and keep us engaged.” Having confidence in this process, they say, is what brings clarity of purpose.

Nailing precisely what is creatively satisfying can be complex and, at times, almost impossible. “I’m not sure I’ve found my red thread, but I know I’m getting there,” reveals John McFaul

STUCK IN A DEAD-END JOB?

Few designers are fortunate enough to love every job they land, and some will end up in roles they actively dislike. How you cope when faced with professional frustration and even anger will affect your career.

When Peter Tennent ended up in a job that offered no room for progression, "working with people I didn't like, on projects that gave nothing and took everything", he leapt at the first opportunity that came his way. With hindsight, he admits it was not the best course of action. "Rather than having the patience to wait for something more considered, I just wanted to get out."

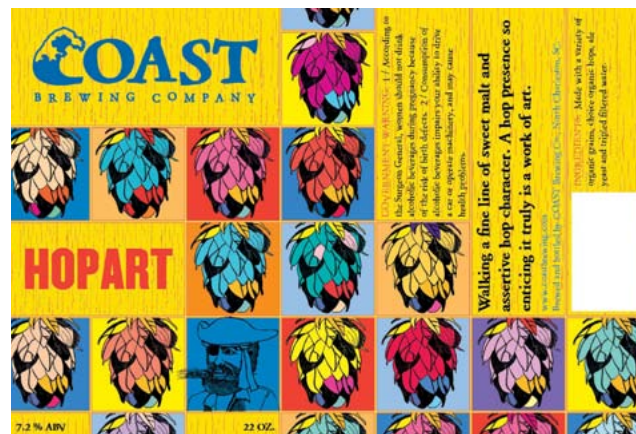
As the manager of a copy centre for years, Adriana de Barros also found herself "trapped and unhappy" - but she was determined to take positives from the situation. "I used my frustration in a positive way, creating new projects, Web sites, and paintings."

For John McFaul, the first six years as an illustrator after graduating were "hellish". "You can be so typecast as an illustrator. I was doing the same job day in, day out. I was quick to utilize the computer back then. I suppose I got off my arse and learnt a thing or two - not in order to 'get on', but because I wanted to get myself out of the tedium of my bland situation."

Some, though, do avoid downturns in their career. Mike Tunney says advice from his first creative director to not keep a job longer than two years has stood him in great stead. "He said jokingly he'd fire me after two years for my own benefit if I was still there. I quit after one-and-a-half-years for a small, award-winning shop in Los Angeles."

"Now I'm getting older my priorities have changed, and I don't jump around so much. But working in various places - everything from large agencies to small design shops and even in-house positions - has given me invaluable experience."

right: Helen Rice and Josh Nissenboim founded Charleston-based studio Fuzzco, and have developed a hand-crafted, playful style for their illustrations, Web site designs and graphic designs.



(www.mcfaul.net), one of the UK's most sought-after illustrators and designers. "The reason for believing this is that I'm not after a particular thing, but an understanding of my ability and my team's ability to constantly evolve as designers, down avenues not necessarily open to us previously. We want to be challenged every day. We don't want an easy life."

However, seeking a life filled with challenges is no easy task, he says. "It's tough... the design industry is so blinkered."

For others, design cannot be separated from other aspects of life, meaning that the creative red thread becomes interwoven with other goals and aspirations.

"I no longer want to be a top businessperson by the age of 30," explains multi-disciplinary designer and artist Adriana de Barros (www.breathewords.com). "I want to be

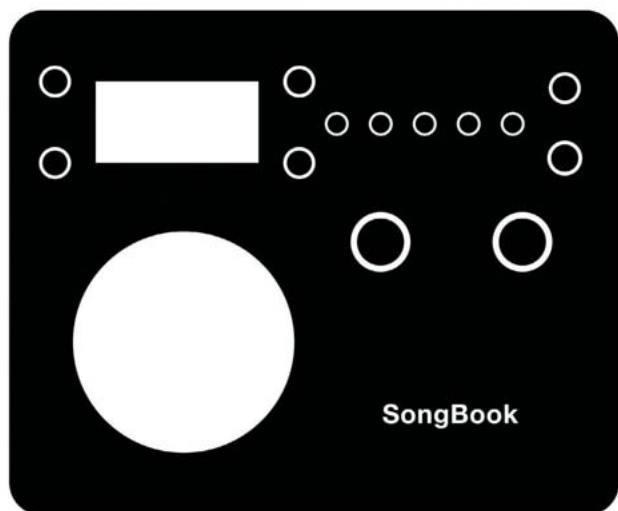
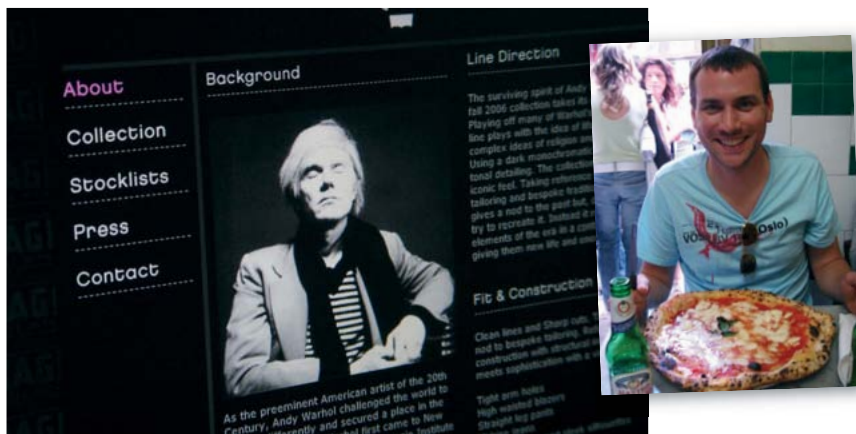
successful, to be the best designer and illustrator that I can be, but being happy is my number one priority, and this means having a balance of other elements in life, such as family, friends, love, hobbies, and travelling. I also want to enjoy the small things in life."

While understanding what is personally fulfilling provides direction, is it necessary to have a clear plan on how to put this into practice?

"Not necessarily," believes McFaul. "But it pays to be aspirational and to know the industry, because only then can you determine where you want to go. This was the biggest thing for me. Recognizing that the industry I wanted to be part of didn't hold everything I wished for was eye-opening, to say the least. That's when my business started to call the shots. Everyone needs some appreciation of what they have to offer."

De Barros believes that having a clear sense of who you are is a





CASH VS. CREATIVITY: THE BALANCING ACT

Living the creative dream may not always be compatible with paying bills and mortgages and supporting a family. So is it possible to put one's creative goals to one side for a time for, say, a higher salary, and still go on to achieve what you want in your career?

"Sure," says Mike Tunney. "But you have to really understand why you'd want to compromise yourself in the first place."

When Tunney found himself in a well-paid position with an interactive firm, but unhappy with the work and clients, he took a position that paid less but that involved much more responsibility.

"It allowed me to be the person in charge," he says. "It was a great opportunity for me to grow creatively and get a better understanding of how a business is run. I knew I'd never get another opportunity to build a global brand from the ground up, especially aged 27. The payout was only temporary, but the experience has been life-changing."

Peter Tennent contends that it is always dangerous to take "just any job". "There must be a reason - a few, hopefully - why the job is right," he says. "This may well be that it provides you with a stepping stone of experience, but anything fewer than a couple of years in a job will just look on your CV like something went wrong."

John McFaul insists that the choice of which jobs to take and which to turn down depends entirely on who you are. "There will always be a line not to cross. For me, there have been difficult decisions from time to time, and earnings lost at times when money was actually everything. We're a lot more selective these days."

For de Barros, the wisdom of taking on a role for reasons other than job satisfaction depends on the job and the person. But, she says, "you can end up working in another field to make ends meet until you can pursue your dream job". She adds that this can be considered a "sacrifice to reach the next step in your life".

left: Over the past nine years, Mike Tunney's career has led him to clients as diverse as tattoo studios and pharmaceutical companies, taking in heavy hitters such as Levis, Sony and Universal Studios on the way. He has provided graphic designs for skateboards, T-shirts, movie logos and Web sites. He is now an art director for Ogilvy One, and says that it's essential to both plan ahead and keep an open mind.

prerequisite to knowing what you want. "From there it will be easier to reach your goals. It is important to have dreams, but sometimes we don't know how to reach the end goal, until we take the first steps."

Tunney emphasizes the need for planning. "If you don't have a plan, you'll end up spending far too much time in a place that isn't benefiting you, your career or your happiness."

Tennent is less sure. "The consensus is to plan, but I know a lot

Fuzzco's Rice and Nissenboim agree with this, adding that it's important to aim high. "You have to constantly redesign your plan as you go along, and part of your goal should be something far-reaching, and you must recognize that this goal is possible."

Of course, putting a plan into practice is a different matter. If you fail to maintain career momentum it's just a matter of time before you slip into a creative rut.

In retrospect, Tennent feels he should have been more demanding when younger, with a greater sense of his own worth. "Having been an employer for the past decade I now realize the

If you fail to maintain career momentum you'll slip into a creative rut

of people who plan madly and don't get anywhere, and a lot of successful people who were just in the right place at the right time. But I guess if I was starting out again I would have a better plan - it might have helped me get where I wanted to go faster."

However, he does believe that any plan should be flexible. "Make it a living thing that changes with you, and don't stick to it too rigidly."

importance of keeping good people. Looking back, I should have been more bullish in my requests to past employers."

Tunney believes that self-assessment is important, too. "If you feel like you're not getting what you need from a position in terms of compensation, work, responsibilities or happiness, then those are all real reasons to start looking elsewhere."



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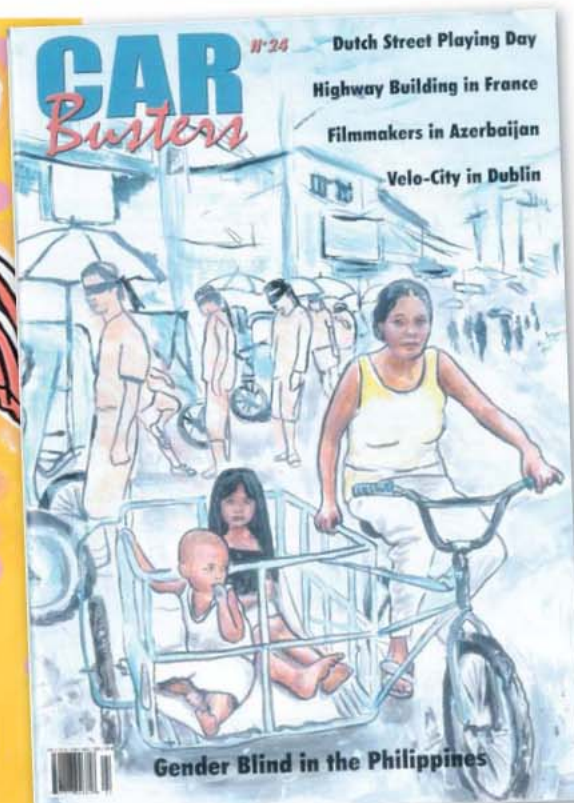
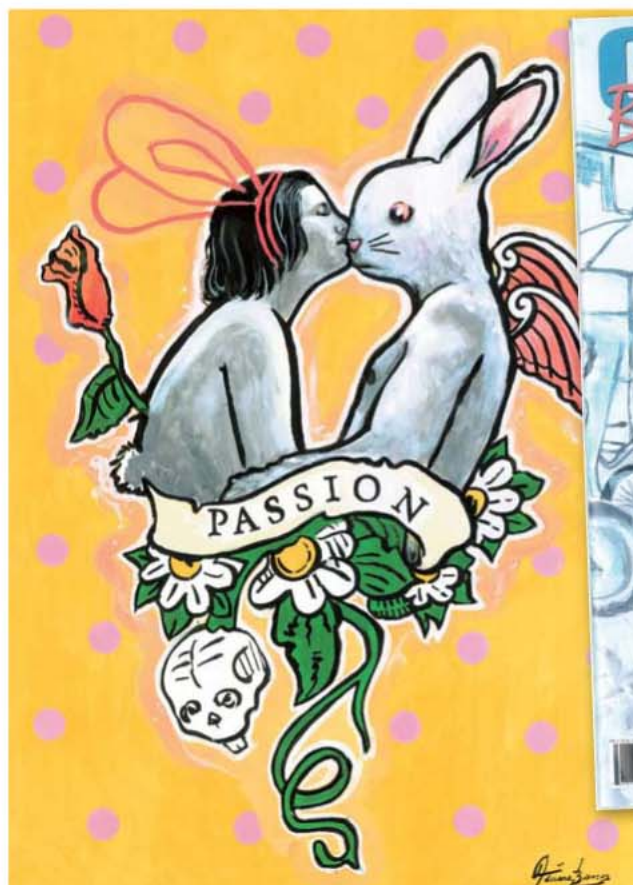
He advises designers to "look in the rear-view mirror at least twice a year, to see if you are still on track for the goals you set when taking the position".

Pushing the creative envelope is McFaul's anti-rut protection policy. "Constantly evolve. Push yourself. Keep fresh. Do what you believe is right. Don't follow the crowd - they probably don't know where they are going. Make them follow you. If you know your subject you should be able to direct yourself. Your opinions and beliefs will guide you."

Few dreams - creative or otherwise - come true without hard work. Tennent confirms that design is no career for the lazy. "It's a time-based industry, so the more time you put in the more you get out. Effort versus reward in the creative industries does not match a career in finance, say, so there needs to be other rewards than just money."

"I've worked as hard as I could to make it to the next level at whatever job I was in," says Tunney. "I'm still applying the same principle. I've missed out on some fun things because of work, but it's been worth it. But there has to be a balance between life and work, else you'll just burn out."

Not McFaul, whose creative dream has been built upon a 24/7 philosophy.



Above and below: Peter Tennent's product design agency, Factory Design, produces multi-award winning designs for clients including Remington hair products and aircraft designers. He says that it's crucial to him that his company's success is balanced by a happy home life.



"That's how it has to be. But it's what we're happiest doing. It's not a job, this. It's life! We love it when we have interns who want to 'do what we do' and crumble spectacularly on yet another all-nighter."

But he concedes that Tunney has a point about striking a work-life balance. "The past 15 years have put a huge strain on my family, my friends and my health. It's hard."

All are agreed that part of that hard work must involve education - technical, professional, personal or otherwise.

"Education has played an enormous role for me," reveals McFaul. "I was a senior lecturer in graphic design for eight

above, right and below: Adriana de Barros runs Breathewords, a design agency providing illustration, Web design, paintings and graphics. She believes that it's all too easy to lose perspective when chasing the dream career, and tries to maintain a fully-rounded life.

"I try to learn something new every year in order to stay current"

years, and it enabled me to finally find myself and understand my capabilities and what was actually out there for me."

"Education is very important," agrees Tunney. "Self-education or more traditional education - whatever works best for you. I try to learn something new every year in order to stay current. It's important to challenge yourself."

"It's essential to learn and keep learning," stresses Tennent. "Education >

right: Despite claiming he's still in the process of discovering his red thread, John McFaul runs the successful illustration agency McFaul. Its clients include Virgin Atlantic, IBM, Orange, Nike, British Airways, Casio, Vodafone, Carhartt and Penguin. He says that his background in lecturing was crucial to his development as a designer.



can be as simple as reading the paper and discovering a new fact or figure. It is all about the gathering or gaining of information and when this stops, others go past you."

"Staying up-to-date is critical," explain Rice and Nissenboim. "There are always new trends, practices and pieces of software that change the game. Also, be aware of what is going on outside of

"Be aware of what's going on outside your industry"

your industry - as if to cross-train your brain."

And what about Lady Luck? Does she play any part in the realization of one's creative goals?

"You need to make things happen to find luck," says de Barros. However, not everybody agrees.

"The idea you have to make your own luck is, frankly, bollocks," contends Tennent. "How on earth can you do that? Luck is unpredictable."

"A good education, hard work and networking play more of a role in career development, but a little luck never hurt anyone," concludes Tunney.

DigitalArts



Vault49

This New York-based design, illustration and photography practice was founded in 2002 by Jonathan Kenyon and John Glasgow, who met on the London College of Printing's graphic design course. In little more than five years the practice has built up a stellar client list spanning global brands from Greenpeace to Honda, taking in Pepsi, Coca-Cola, MTV and the BBC on the way. Their fashion collaboration with label Artful Dodger has propelled their designs onto the shoulders of Kanye West and Ludacris, among other stars.

Their route to success has been enviably direct; a fact that Jonathan Kenyon attributes to their determination to please themselves first and foremost. "We achieved success by always designing for ourselves first and not caring too much about what we thought would sell," he said. "Whenever we find ourselves losing our spark, we always seek to regain that same focus on designing for our own enjoyment first, and it continues to work for us."

They have applied this principle even to the most fundamental aspects of running their business, such as where to base themselves. "The move to New York was based on our personal desire for a change in lifestyle, and once again the decisions we made for our own self-interest always seem to be the best business decisions too. What makes us happy makes our business successful."

www.vault49.com





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Show me the money



words Sean Ashcroft illustration www.kapitza.com

If your design agency needs a cash injection to reach the next level, look for specialists in creative funding.

 Growing a small or medium-sized business is tricky and expensive, and design agencies are no exception. Whether it's a move to bigger premises, hiring more staff or even a second office in another city, design businesses are just as likely as any enterprise to find themselves needing external funding.

Knowing where to start when seeking funding is difficult, because there are so many options, only a minority of which will be suitable for design agencies.

Two of the most common sources of funding for businesses of any kind are business angels and venture capitalists. Business angels are wealthy individuals who invest on their own, or as part of a syndicate, in high-growth businesses. Venture capital, meanwhile, is a form of private equity typically provided by professional outside investors to growth businesses. This is usually a cash-for-shares deal.

For design agencies, business angels are likely to be more appropriate at first, as the bulk of such financing is for packages of between £50-£250,000.

If further funding is required to facilitate the next stage of growth (typically £2 million plus), this is more commonly venture capital. With business angels, your greatest chance of success

is to seek one who has experience in the design sector, because as well as money, they may well make their own skills, experience and contacts available to you. You can pay an intermediary to help investigate this option. For more information about business angels, visit the British Business Angels Association (www.bbaa.org.uk).

Venture capital is highly selective; venture capitalists invest in fewer than five per cent of the opportunities they see, and they see many. Your design agency must have potential for high growth, and have a management team that can achieve such growth.

Business angels may make their skills and contacts available to you

Again, you can increase your chances by using a reputable intermediary – they will help to focus your efforts, and should know the preferences and criteria of likely investors.

But most of all, remember venture capitalists like facts and figures, not projections, guesses and speculations. Include a SWOT (strength, weaknesses,

opportunities and threats) analysis of your design agency in your proposal, and don't pull any punches on the weaknesses and threats – all businesses have them, and venture capitalists will expect you to know what they are so that you can deal with them.

National and local government funding is another option for design agencies. Many of the London-based schemes require that you set up your venture in, or relocate to, a so-called Objective 2 area. These are areas suffering industrial decline, urban deprivation, low economic activity and social exclusion. Borough councils are keen to see start-ups and small- to medium-sized businesses such as design agencies move to such areas.

Grants can be another source of funding, but before applying for one, first identify planned projects that might qualify – and, crucially, never take on unsuitable design projects just because a grant is available.

You will also need to ensure that your design business has funds to invest in the project itself, because typically grants cover only between 15-60 per cent of the costs of any project.

It's worth remembering that a number of the organizations featured here offer business training, some of which is free.

ORGANIZATIONS

ArtsMatrix

www.artsmatrix.org.uk
0117 915 0190

ArtsMatrix is the skills and enterprise development agency for creative practitioners in the South West of England. It enables arts and creative industries professionals to develop skills to make the most of their careers. Its services include one-to-one professional development planning, skills audits, sector-specific seminars, and training programmes.

The service is available to anyone working professionally in the arts and creative industries in the South West of England at any stage of their career. ArtsMatrix has also been selected to deliver the £800,000 Skills Development Programme, under which hundreds of creative industries businesspeople in south-west England will be given greater access to new skills that will help them grow their businesses.

Business Eye

www.busesseye.org.uk
08457 969 798

Business Eye is a free, impartial information service for businesses in Wales. It caters to established companies, start-ups, and sole traders, putting them in contact with support from the public, private or voluntary sectors.

Creative Business Accelerator

www.gle.co.uk
020 7403 0300

Creative Business Accelerator (CBA) is a free service aimed at owners of both early stage and established businesses in London's creative industry sector who want to attract equity investment.

The programme "addresses the difficulties many businesses face in securing funding from investors who prefer established businesses and the economies of scale of larger investments".

CBA will assess your business, and if it decides it's suitable, you will take an intensive course providing guidance and advice on developing a business plan, sources of finance, legal and intellectual property issues as well as valuing your business.

Creative Capital Fund

www.ccfund.co.uk
0870 909 6333

This was established through Creative London, the agency for the creative industries that's part of the London Development Agency. The CCF works closely with small- to medium-sized businesses throughout London, offering investment, mentoring and support.

The fund is available for businesses based in Greater London, with a portion of funding allocated for investment in so-called 'Objective 2' deprived areas.

The CCF makes equity investments of up to £500,000 in promising early stage companies. Every £1 invested by the CCF must be matched by £1 in equity from private investors on the same terms. Typically, the CCF will invest up to £75,000 in the first instance.

EU Media Programme

tinyurl.com/22gzhc

Media is the EU support programme for the European audiovisual industry. It co-finances training initiatives for audiovisual industry professionals, the development of production projects (including new media and animation), as well as the promotion of European audiovisual works.

The programme comprises a series of support measures for this area, including training, developing production projects, and distributing and promoting projects.

The European Parliament also voted a budget of €2 million

in December, with the aim of strengthening co-operation between audiovisual industries of third world countries and European countries.

Greater London Enterprise

www.gle.co.uk
020 7403 0300

Greater London Enterprise (GLE) is London's economic development company, wholly owned by all 33 London boroughs to deliver economic regeneration in the capital. GLE manages £40 million, a portion of which is to support businesses.

It provides a broad range of finance packages for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Financial packages include: loans to start your business; loans of up to £7,500 to help get your business off the ground; and loans of up to £40,000 to help you develop your business further. It also offers free marketing and business planning training courses.

Innovation Central

www.innovationcentral.co.uk
020 7514 2138

Innovation Central awards bursaries to help small, innovative businesses in Camden and Islington grow and prosper. You can apply for an award of up to £3,500 towards the cost of developing your business plan and putting it into action.

A total of 15 bursaries are made each year, with the emphasis being on high-growth businesses that will create jobs and business opportunities in the area.

The deadline for applications for the next round of bursaries is March 29, 2008.

LDA Loan Fund

www.lda.gov.uk
020 7593 9000

The London Development Agency (LDA) has developed a £10 million loan programme jointly funded by the EU with a 40 per cent private sector contribution from Barclays Bank. The fund addresses gaps in funding available for businesses within so-called Objective 2 deprived areas of London.

Loans are available to businesses looking to start or grow a business, are available at interest rates comparable a bank's, and are repayable monthly over a period that suits the individual business owner.

The LDA Loan Fund can provide loans of £5,000-£50,000 for small and start-up SMEs and larger loans of £50,000-£250,000 for SMEs.

Selective Finance for Investment in England

www.lda.gov.uk
020 7593 8688

This scheme, managed by the London Development Agency, provides grants to businesses towards the capital investment costs of a project that will contribute to the local area's skills, employment and economy. Under the scheme, SMEs anywhere in London can receive a grant from 7.5

per cent up to a maximum of 15 per cent of a project's total capital expenditure.

The minimum grant is £10,000; projects involving investment of less than £70,000 will not normally qualify.

South West Design Forum

www.swdf.co.uk

The South West has a high concentration of professional designers and design businesses; the SWDF connects these designers and businesses, and works to share ideas between sub-regional and cultural agencies, national design bodies, higher education institutions, and other key public and private sector organizations.

South West Screen

www.swscreen.co.uk
0117 952 9977

South West Screen is the film, television and digital media agency for the South West of England. Its main areas of work are business support, locations, creative development, exhibition, training, education and funding. Its work attracts funding from the South West Regional Development Agency.

Think Big

www.thinkbig-itg.org
020 8320 9440

Think Big is a programme to accelerate and diversify the growth of businesses in the Thames Gateway region. A dedicated innovation team helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) exploit technology and business support services.

Think Big works with companies to gain finance and grants, find technologies to improve products or process, research new markets, and innovate.

In order to be eligible for support, your company must be an SME located in, or wanting to relocate to, the Objective 2 Region of the Thames Gateway.

Venture Wales

01443 742888

This is a business support organization providing advice and specialist knowledge on strategy, marketing and finance. It provides business support and advice to SMEs and entrepreneurs in the area.

Venture Wales can review your finance needs to help you develop your investment plan. After evaluating your plan, its finance team will help you secure additional funding via its database of grants, loans and awards.

It also works with a number of investment networks, and they can introduce business owners to investors. The initial meeting with a consultant is free.



Prime Focus discovers animal magic

Blending puppetry with 3D animation provides plenty of challenges for Prime Focus, as they give kids' classic *Tales of the Riverbank* a 21st-century remake.

words Lynn Wright



The partnership between UK and Indian post-production facilities formed when the Prime Focus group bought VTR in 2006 has come into play on its first major visual-effects project, *Tales of the Riverbank*.

Directed by *Spitting Image*'s John Henderson, *Tales of the Riverbank* is a feature film remake of the popular children's TV series of the early 1960s. The film tells the story of three friends – Hammy Hamster, Roderick Rat and GP the Guinea Pig – who, having been swept downriver in a violent storm, embark on an epic journey in search of their lost homes. The animals' adventures include encountering the evil Fat Cats and their WMD (Waffle, Marmalade and Doughnut) factory.

While the original programme used real animals as the characters, the remake uses puppetry and 3D animation with the furry cast

members voiced by stars of British comedy, including Stephen Fry and Steve Coogan.

As the film was shot almost totally against bluescreen, the vast majority of the visual-effects shots that Prime Focus created involved multiple rig and puppeteer removal, with keyed-out elements then tracked and composited into real riverbank backgrounds. Nearly 1,200 shots of this nature were finished at Indian facilities in Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Parel, while the remaining, more complex, shots were completed in London. This allowed the British client direct access to the work in progress.

The shots handled in London ranged from extensive CG set builds and fluid simulations, including the entire WMD factory and its bubbling marmalade, to the film's fully CG characters Owl, Falcon and Flea.

The project's immense scale called for a streamlined pipeline and close coordination

CREDITS

PROJECT
Tales of the Riverbank

CLIENT
Riverbank the Movie

STUDIO:
Prime Focus London
primefocuslondon.com

SOFTWARE:
Softimage|XSI
Adobe Photoshop CS3
NextLimit RealFlow
Pixologic Zbrush
Eyeon Fusion
Autodesk Maya

between modellers and animators. "The pipeline was developed around the tight delivery of shots," explains John Harvey, head of 3D/VFX at Prime Focus London (PLF).

For modelling, texturing and animation, the PFL team used Softimage|XSI. "Without the flexibility of XSI's modelling and texture tools we would have struggled to deliver within the tight timeframe," explains Harvey. "The animation editor with its ability to mix IK with FK enabled the main CG character of the Owl to have quite a detailed library of moves. Also XSI's customizable sliders and synoptic view allowed for quick editing and layouts. It has become our base package for animation due to its flexibility."

Some supplementary atmospherics were created in Autodesk Maya, while the fluid simulations were achieved with XSI and RealFlow. "These required an extremely capable and technical operator to achieve the



"The Owl is a great piece of CG character animation," says Derek Moore, head of 2D at Prime Focus London. Initially a very detailed skeleton structure was built, but initial animation test proved too lifelike, which sat awkwardly with the puppets used for the other characters, says John Harvey, head of 3D. "So we decided to derive a skeletal structure from the same system employed with the puppets." When it came to producing the final render for the Owl shots, the 3D team started with ten layer passes before narrowing these down to five for a typical build. Several render passes were predefined and combined, to reduce the workload for the compositors while letting the dual quad-core renderfarm take the strain.

look and feel we needed," notes Harvey.

Completing the pipeline were ZBrush for the fine detailing of the elements, Photoshop CS 3 for the digital matte paintings and Boujou for tracking.

"We began by conceptualizing all the CG elements and creatures in the film, creating concept art for approval before any 3D work was started. The factory exterior and interior were also painted up, and their look and feel approved before build," he says. "We also completed several inline tests in order to establish techniques and limitations. Normally this would be done pre-production but due to time constraints we had to do most of this on the fly."

The team's main challenge in creating the CG characters was matching them to the look

It's the first time we've ever been asked to pull back on realism

and feel of the puppets used in the film. The design for the Owl character, for example, went through several stages. Based on the figure of an eagle owl, and drawing on the character of the actor (Stephen Fry) who voiced him, several designs were presented before the green light was given for the character's appearance.

The first build of the Owl character in Softimage|XSI was anatomically perfect, built up from a skeleton with first muscle groups added then feathers. Initial animation, however, proved too realistic and didn't gel with the more stylized puppets used in the film.

"We then decided to derive our skeletal structure for the Owl from the same system employed with the puppets in the film," says Harvey. "This presented a challenging task for the animators and modellers, as the Owl's movements needed to look somewhat mechanical but realistic – as if they had inserted a pole into the character and sticks into the wings."

Derived from a real owl, the feathers were dynamically animated using Softimage's Hair system allowing for realistic bodily interaction.

The Owl's head movements and facial expressions were controlled using an elaborate array of sliders. The wings had several expression operators linked to the bones, which in turn controlled how the feathers behaved, allowing the wings to be folded without feathers cutting through each other. Secondary expressions were used to control the wind ruffle.

The biggest CG set challenge facing the PFL team was the interior of the WMD factory. The entire interior set was built in CG to allow for the complex lighting, fluid simulations and particle generations.

The marmalade that features in these shots was created using two different techniques. "The original brief was to create a liquid that shared properties with marmalade and boiling lava, to increase the



sense of danger facing the hero characters," says Harvey.

"The boiling marmalade was a flat, semi-transparent surface with an in-house developed animated bubble shader driving the displacement of the surface," he explains. "This was broken down into multiple layers (growing bubbles, popped bubble residue, and residual ripple noise), which gave the surface lots of interest in the diffuse reflections and refractions. We also added marmalade shred below the surface and animated this to give the marmalade more depth and life."

To create the flowing marmalade, the team turned to NextLimit's RealFlow fluid simulation software. The team began by conducting several animation tests in order to get the correct level of viscosity and the scale for the liquid marmalade.

"Lots of the settings can be bracketed – in the same way exposure can be bracketed on a camera – to make slight changes in the variables available to us such as viscosity, density, surface tension, and internal and external pressures. We can then see the result and alter the settings appropriately," explains Harvey.

The locations that featured the CG marmalade were also modelled to match the footage, allowing the gooey liquid to fit and interact with the filmed sets and characters.

According to Harvey, the hardest shot to create was the smashing cauldron of liquid marmalade because it involved a rigid-body simulation to mimic the impact of the cauldron on the floor.

Using RealFlow, the rigid-body simulation was completed as a first pass before the fluids, with the animators using RealFlow's stacking RB solver to correctly calculate the chain of forces needed to hold the fragments of cauldron together as it falls under gravity towards the ground.

"A similar simulation in other packages



The hardest shot to create was the smashing cauldron of liquid marmalade

often causes the pieces to 'explode' apart at the first frame, requiring workarounds," explains Harvey. "With a successful and approved cauldron simulation, I was able to fill the cauldron with the thick marmalade-like fluid. The floor was given a high friction value to get the marmalade to slow down or stick when it collides."

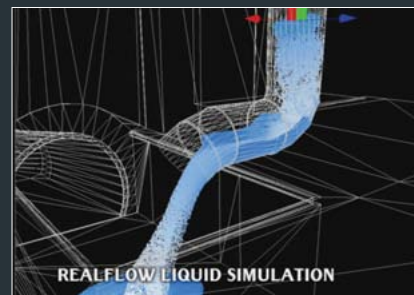
Prime Focus London created additional – mainly supplementary – CG elements for the film. These ranged from balloons, flying rocks, slime drops that fall from the sky like rain, to a waterwheel on the side of the WMD factory. CG set extensions were also called for, including a decimated landscape and tar pits, and the main river itself.

"These were particularly interesting shots as they were combined and supplemented in Eyeon Fusion, which uses normal maps in an Open EXR format. This enabled fast updates and tweaking, with the final look being achieved through a seamless pipeline from CG to Fusion," says Harvey.

Following on from the CG and compositing, a digital intermediate (DI) process was completed entirely in London which, because of the heavy VFX nature of the film, took three months to finish.

The film has yet to be given a release date but expect it at cinemas soon.

DigitalArts



The interior of WMD factory was the biggest set challenge, says John Harvey, as it included cauldrons casting their own lights on the interior walls. While models were built for the external shots of the factory, the interior set was recreated in CG to allow for the complex lighting and particle generations.





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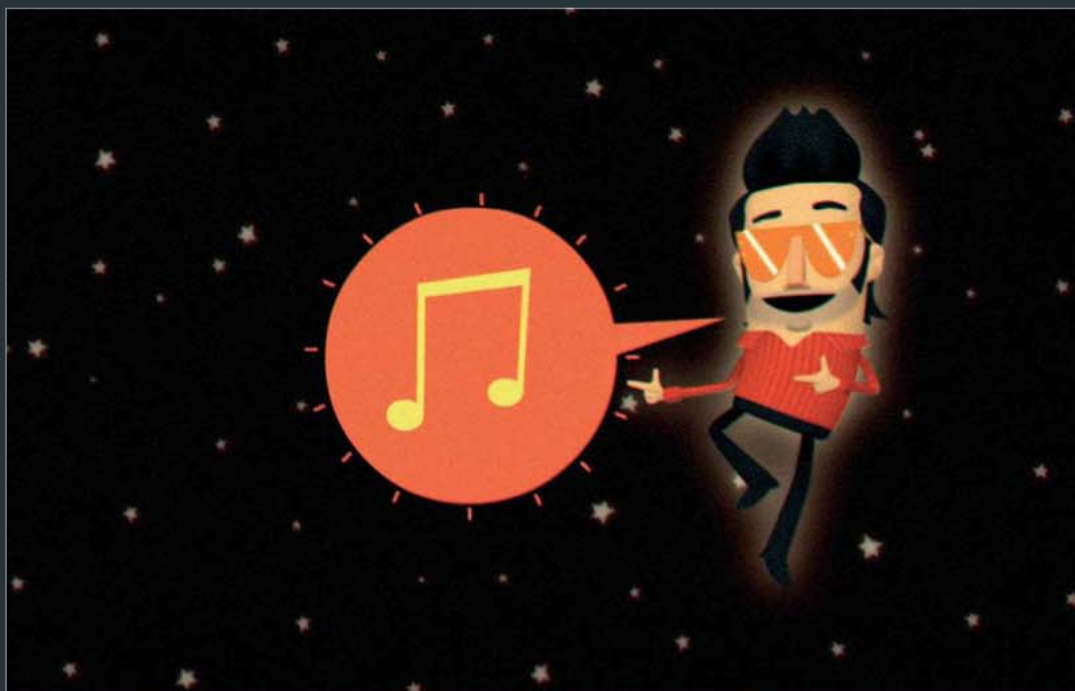
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Rocking all over the world

Two rookie directors at Axis Animation went back to basics to create the promo for a pop song about music's feelgood potential.

words Alice Ross

There are certain concepts that are so well-worn that coming up with an original, attention-grabbing way to illustrate them is a serious challenge. The music promo for the song *Sing*, by French dance act Jealousy, could easily have been one of those concepts: the song is about music's feelgood power and ability to bring people together. However, the end result is far from predictable. Instead, it's a quirky, funny little tale in which an Elvis-coiffed caricature of lead singer Mani Hoffman roams the world ending tyranny, oppression and stultifying corporate cultures of all kinds through the power of song. Packed with offbeat characters and primary colours, it has an eye-catching, retro feel that's helped by the slightly jerky animation and 2D appearance of the characters.

When Jealousy's record label, Zero Degrees Entertainment, commissioned Axis

Animation to produce the animated promo, the brief was vague. "They wanted something funny, something that had a light, fresh feel that matched the track," says Richard Scott, executive producer at Axis. "They also had a desire to give the promo worldwide appeal, and this meant the brief called for Mani Hoffman travelling across the globe."

"The label also wanted his voice to 'change the world' by making people happy," add Stephen and Dave, two of Axis's young directors who were handed the project as their first music promo. They started by fleshing out the brief, deciding that Mani was travelling the world to tackle injustice purely by singing.

"From there, we developed the idea to feature some of the issues that are concerns for people all over the world, concerns about global warming, war and dictatorships came to mind. All we had to do next was work out

how to incorporate them into a light, fresh and funny promo."

They tackled this through a careful use of absurd elements, to stress the animation's tongue-in-cheek qualities. "We just made sure we kept a good blend of the weird in there, so we have characters wearing apples as shoes and headwear, or paintings of the king wrestling lions. These all said that the whole thing was meant to feel a bit strange and not take itself too seriously."

The conflict between topic and tone was far from the only challenge the team faced. "Technically, we had a big challenge getting through the whole project with the small team we had. Everything had to be done simply: there was no time for extreme technical challenges."

Axis turned this to its advantage, adopting simplicity as a trademark of the assignment. "Simplicity was everywhere in this project, and that applied to animation as well. We knew we wanted a real pose-to-pose style in the animation: it gave a different feel, and also meant we could get through the three minutes of animation quickly."

This principle extended to the character design: "We devised these little interchangeable bullet-men who could stand in for the common man," says Stephen. "We designed the characters so that they all had the same body shape and face; this allowed us to then re-version them with different textures and props – a moustache or hat, for example – to create a range of characters for our scenarios within hours."

The distinctive retro styling that Axis adopted posed its own problems. "Hands-on creatively, it was hard to transport the extreme pose-to-pose 2D sensibility that we had onto the 3D models in a convincing way. We solved it by adding little bits of follow-through squash and stretch after the extreme poses to make it less jarring," says Stephen.

For the promo's visual aesthetic, Stephen and Dave turned to the colours and styling of classic children's TV. Stephen says: "I think we're both very fond of 1950s animation, in terms of both design and animation style. *Roger Ramjet* was something we looked at as everything is extremely angular and snappy. *Pocoyo*, the kids' TV show, in terms of giving 3D a 2D animated feel, is a big inspiration too."

They aimed to create a slightly rough, off-kilter feel to the animation, as though it,

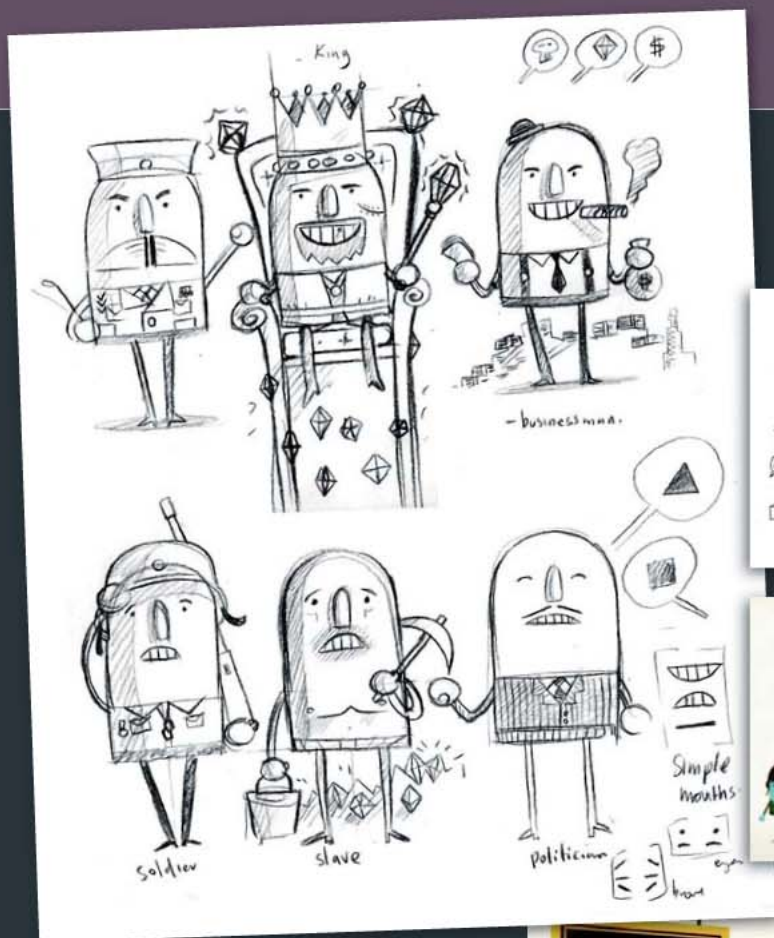
CREDITS

PROJECT
Sing by Jealousy

CLIENT
Zero Degrees
Entertainment

STUDIO:
Axis Animation
axisanimation.com

SOFTWARE:
NewTek LightWave
Autodesk Maya



"The whole thing was meant to feel a bit strange and not take itself too seriously"

too, was decades old. "We wanted it to look like there was something 'wrong' with the animation, that it had been unearthed on 8mm film and had faded or been water damaged. So we applied lots of grainy filters and even shifted one of the colour channels over a few pixels to give the impression it had been recorded badly off TV," says Dave.

"After we had pitched our ideas for Mani righting the world's wrongs to the client, we quickly did sketched layouts for each scenario. This allowed us to see what we needed to design and build and also how we could frame the animation," explains Dave.

For the next stage they looked in detail at the song. "From the layouts Dave created a 2D animatic, timing out how long each scene needed to be, and then we began to

rough out how the animation would work to a click track that gave us the right tempo throughout," says Stephen.

At the same time, they were developing the characters. "During this stage, Stephen was finalizing all the designs for the characters and any props that were required. They were then modelled in 3D and given a simple rig on Maya," says Dave.

Next, they moved onto making the animation itself. "After a first pass on the animation we assembled our first edit with the 3D footage, and played around with the timings and positioning of the different scenarios and shots. As we were using some repeating elements in the promo it was easy for us to be very flexible with the way we could edit, which was great and allowed us



Artistic licence

The caricature of Mani turned out to be quite different from the band's real-life singer: "Mani's character came from a picture we saw online of him in a peacock-like cool-dude pose. Which, having seen other pictures, is not representative of him, but nobody told us off, so we pushed on with this super-confident, slick-haired dancing man-child of a character."



For speed and simplicity, all the characters but Mani were designed around the same bullet-shaped frame; they were then put into situations littered with absurd little details.

to really experiment. After that first cut, we reworked some animation before moving on to the lighting stage. The final step was to complete some simple compositing and grading, and we were done," says Stephen.

Because of the project's simplicity, the team's software requirements were modest. "Modelling was handled by a mixture of LightWave and Maya," explains Dave. "Because the characters and style were so simple we were able to use the 'vanilla' Maya renderer without the need for all the bells and whistles. Some of the animation was also handled in 2D and composited back in with the 3D in After Effects."

Stephen and Dave say that throughout the process, Zero Degrees Entertainment was a laid-back, supportive client: "We had a great deal of creative freedom on *Sing*," say the directors. "It was the first time we've been basically paid to experiment with a look and animation style with minimal input from the client, who seemed to trust us to come up with something strange and unique."

Richard Scott is also satisfied with the end result. "I think the whole thing just feels solid. I love the sense of humour, mixed with some strong messages. It's what I expect from Stephen and Dave, and they delivered the goods."

DigitalArts

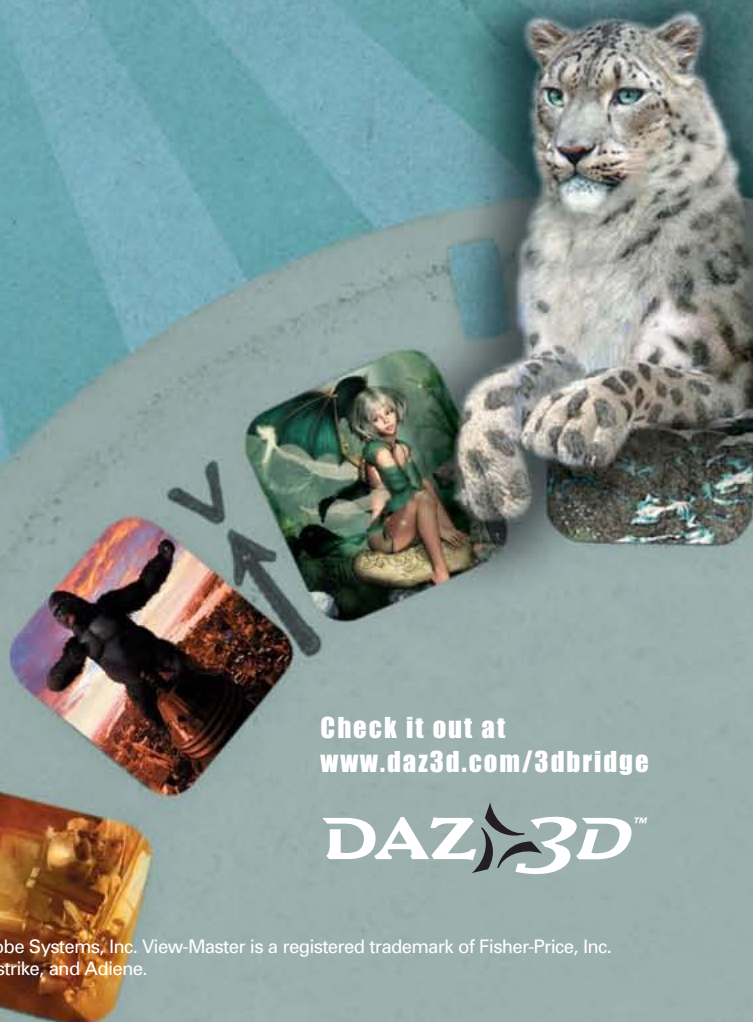
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Th1ng studied London's Victorian-era skyline and researched contemporary artefacts to ensure that the audience is immersed in Sweeney Todd's murky, gory world from the movie's very first frames.



Th1ng's titles make the cut

Th1ng's bloody animated title sequence for Tim Burton's Oscar-nominated *Sweeney Todd* makes sure the film's audience is fully prepared for all manner of macabre goings-on.

words Lynn Wright



"Itchy yet grand" is how Richard Morrison, creative director of animation studio Th1ng, describes his opening title sequence for Tim Burton's big screen adaptation of the Stephen Sondheim musical thriller *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

Designed to draw the reader into the movie's story before it even starts, the 2.5-minute animated sequence establishes the film's visual mood and takes the viewer on an eerie, suspenseful journey that foreshadows the action to come.

The sequence opens on a foggy, rainy view of a Victorian city skyline at night. The camera tracks slowly along the smoky rooftops leading to Sweeney Todd's Fleet Street garret room. Through the window we glimpse Sweeney's iconic barber's chair and, as the camera moves into close-up, we see blood trickling down its arms. The image of

travelling blood becomes the central theme to the sequence, dripping and flowing across elements that foretell the film's storyline.

The sequence marks Morrison's second collaboration with Burton, having worked with the director on the seminal sequence for *Batman* nearly 20 years ago.

There was no brief as such for the job. "That's the beauty of working with Tim," explains Morrison. "We met for a few drinks, discussed the movie, looked at some parts of the script and then he just let me come up with anything really."

Morrison worked closely with Th1ng's art director, Shay Hamias, to conceive the sequence, and the pair then brainstormed ideas with the other directors at Th1ng.

"We all thought of different elements featured in the film... visual elements like the barber's chair, the barber's blades... but also looked into the Victorian period and

CREDITS:

PROJECT

Titles for *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*

CLIENT

Tim Burton,
Dreamworks
Warner Bros Pictures

STUDIO

Th1ng
www.th1ng.com

SOFTWARE

Adobe Photoshop
Adobe Flash
Adobe After Effects
NextLimit RealFlow
Autodesk Maya

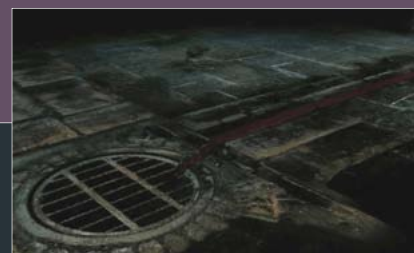
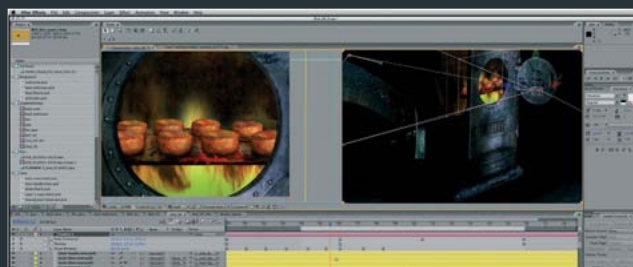
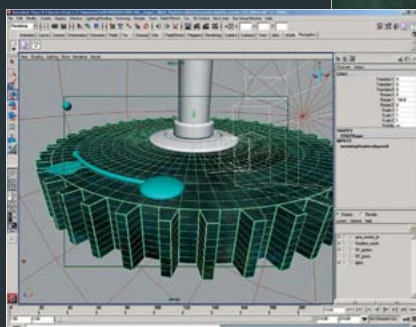
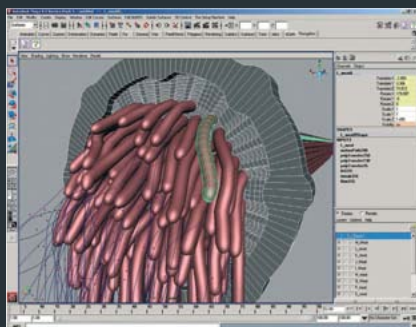
tried to think of a couple of the period's typical elements... We also imagined what the Victorian skyline would have looked like at the time," says Hamias.

Morrison decided on a narrative approach to the sequence, and the use of live action and animation.

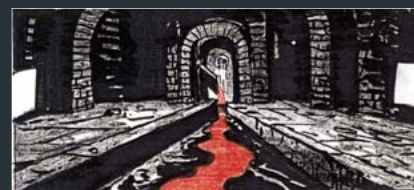
"Alongside that direction, I came up with another idea, a bit more abstract," explains Hamias. "This was the idea of a blood flow in the close-ups. I filmed red paint on my home video camera, splitting and drilling with different textures and tried to create a dry rough feel."

Although the duo received some photographs of the production at the start of the project, giving an idea of how certain set elements looked in the film, they didn't stint on their own research for the period.

"I looked through books on typical Victorian elements that we wanted to use



"We built a special underground sewage square with a grate at the end for this shot," says Shay Hamias. "This was to be a tracking shot... pulling back as the water gets red and filled with blood. It worked fine. It was a huge model, though, and once coloured you needed a long time to clear for any re-shoot!"



The last shot of the animation, showing blood from Sweeney Todd's garret flowing through the Victorian sewage system into the Thames river, was particularly challenging, according to creative director Richard Morrison. "The initial idea was to create many wave layers and stagger them in afterwards. This didn't work very well, so we went into 3D again but this time heavily textured everything so it could all fit in very organically with the general feel of the piece."

in the sequence such as silhouettes, the chair, and various textures. I also got a few drawings of London at that time. This all helped to get a bigger picture of what we wanted," says Hamias.

Once the storyboard and designs were approved by Tim Burton, the duo turned their attention to the flowing blood effect.

They decided to film the majority of the blood elements and movements in a live-action shoot. "This was not only faster but also gave a greater sense of realism," explains Morrison. For the blood shots, which couldn't be achieved with live-action, the team used a mix of 2D and 3D animation.

"Our 3D animation supervisor suggested using RealFlow for most of our blood dropping movements," says Hamias. "This wasn't easy, and at times we had to manipulate some movements to achieve what we wanted... For some elements we used animated 2D blood in Flash and then used Maya to create a displacement map, which kind of made it 3D."

A team of five 3D animators worked on different shots, while one texturing and lighting specialist was in charge of the rendering process.

The main compositing challenge was in

combining the 2D and 3D elements with the live action: "Our compositing spec would place things in a 2.5D world in After Effects, creating the camera move and the correct timing. This was usually transferred as a locked move and background for blood movements," explains Hamias. "Some of the shoots were a 3D track back on a live action. We had to combine them into a 3D world in After Effects and then tracking in live-action shoots also from 2D art work. This all sounds so complicated when I think about it now.

"Luckily our main compositing animator, Peque Valeria, came up with this brilliant idea of cheating angles to make all differently sourced footage (2D and 3D) work together."

The film was rendered out in 2K and close-up elements at 4K, which called for a lot of rendering power, recalls Hamias.

In total the sequence took nearly three months to complete with a team of 10 people working on it.

"It was a big job, as the whole project was so varied," says Morrison. "We're pleased, however, with how we managed to keep consistency in style over different environments, from the wide shot of the London panorama to close-ups on the inside of cogwheels."

DigitalArts



Oscar hopes

As *Digital Arts* went to press, it was announced that *Sweeney Todd*... has been nominated for three Academy Awards, including Best Actor (for Johnny Depp), Achievement in Art Direction and Achievement in Costume Design.



"We had to create the rain using glycerin, which created a very slow downward movement and added to the oddity of the piece," explains Th1ng art director Shay Hamias. "Filming this required a lot of patience... We shot it in four different distances from a close-up to a wider angle. This was then brilliantly composited in our 2/3D world."

The image of travelling blood becomes the central theme to the sequence

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WHO

ROBERT CARISSIMO

Rob is a freelance graphic artist from New Jersey. A graduate of Keene State College in New Hampshire, he works in print, Web and apparel. Rob is currently working on a clothing line called Strain Clothing and is designing its graphic tees, hats and hoodies. Some of his other clients include Fox Racing, Blatant Pictures, Radical Comics and Obvious Clothing.

CONTACT

48thchamber.com

SOFTWARE

Adobe Photoshop

TIME TO COMPLETE

2.5 to 3 hours



ON THE CD

Files for this tutorial can be found on the cover CD.

Create amazing psychedelic art in Photoshop

Rob Carissimo reveals how to layer and blend images in Photoshop to create a hazy, dreamlike effect that's straight from 60s California.



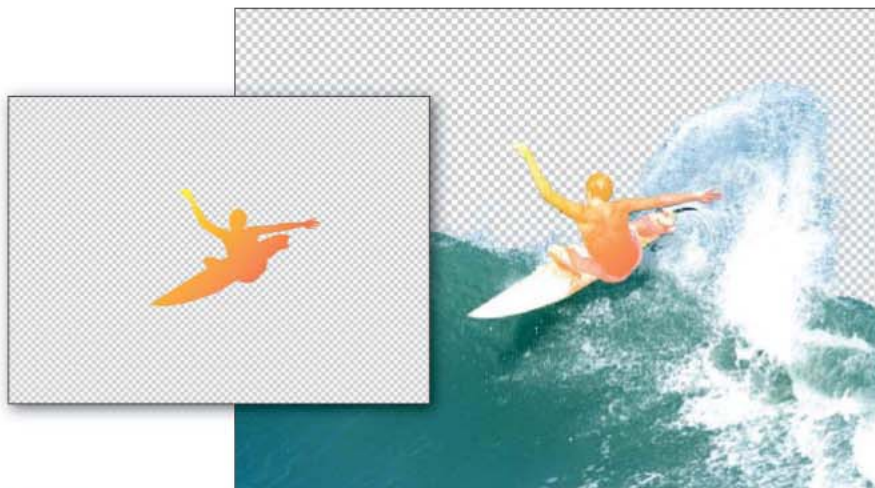
The psychedelic look is always in demand. However, creating an illustration that has the appearance of being formed under the influence of LSD in a hippie commune in San Francisco circa 1968 is tricky if you're in a studio in the UK in 2008 with nothing stronger than coffee in your system. But by layering and blending images in Photoshop, you can evoke the trippy look without messing with your mind.

By combining multiple versions of the same image with different effects applied to them, the final image has a surreal feel to it while retaining a clearly recognizable subject – which is at the core of psychedelic imagery.

The blend of layers allows you to subtly manipulate the colour scheme, introducing the pastel shades of the hippie movement, again without disrupting the clarity of the image's subject matter.



01 Create a new document sized 840-x-720. Select a base image; here I've used a surfer image from iStockphoto (www.istockphoto.com/file_closeup.php?id=1004242), but any similar image will be suitable. Import your base image to the document. Create a mask of the wave and surfer with parts of the spray as well. Label the layer Masked Wave. Adjust the contrast and brightness a little, then set the blend mode to Multiply.



02 In a new layer, create a silhouette of the surfer, and give it a yellow to red gradient fill. Set the blend mode to Screen, and place it above the masked wave layer.



03 Create gradient patterns of light blue to transparent from top to bottom, stopping halfway down the page. Then create a dark blue to transparent gradient from the bottom left diagonal towards the centre to look like this. Next, place the gradient layer behind the masked wave layer, with normal blend mode.

04 Mask out the surfer from the wave and paste him onto his own layer, naming it Masked Surfer. Duplicate the layer and hide the original. Now select the duplicate and apply **Filter > Distort > Displace**. Apply the settings shown and select the file `displace_surf1.psd`.



TIP

When painting on layer masks, vary the brush size and your use of a hard-edged or soft-edged brush. A soft-edged brush will give a fading effect, while a hard-edged brush gives a sharper edge. Change your brush size, too: smaller brushes make it much easier to get the detail right.



05 Rename the displaced layer Displaced Surfer. Set the opacity to 70 per cent and begin to mask out parts of the layer so it looks something like this.



06 Select the entire canvas using **Select > All**, then **Edit > Copy Merged**, then **Edit > Paste**. Drag that layer to the top, and hide the layer made up of four bars.



07 On another layer on top of previous layers, create four even, coloured bars at a 45 degree angle, and make a selection of the masked surfer layer to erase any part of the lines that pass through the surfer so that the lines stop at his head and arm. Set the blend mode for the layer to Hard Light, and the opacity of the layer to 10 per cent.



step > 08 Select the entire canvas using **Select > All**, then **Edit > Copy Merged**, then **Edit > Paste**. Drag that layer to the top, and hide the layer made up of four bars.



step > 09 Now, click **Filter > Distort > Displace**. Set the horizontal and vertical scale to 80 and select Stretch To Fit and Repeat Edge. Click OK and select the select file named *displace_surf2.psd*; your result should resemble this image. Create a layer mask next and begin to erase parts of the layer so that the previous work can show through until you begin to see a similar effect to the image below, with most of the board and head being cleaner.



step > 10 Make three copies of the surfer layer for your selection, and then go **Select > Copy Merged** and Paste. Scale the images to three sizes, each larger than the last. Set the blend modes on all three to Multiply and give the smallest an opacity of 20 per cent, next largest 15 per cent, and the last 10 per cent. Now erase parts of them.



step > 11 Open the file named *destroyed.psd*. In the Fill box, set white as your background colour, and hit **Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + Delete** to change the colour to white. Drag the file into the canvas, position it in the top left corner and set its opacity to 35 per cent.

TIP

The Displace tool is useful for a number of functions, such as mimicking realistic water surfaces or putting text and images onto creased surfaces. It works by mapping the contrast between shadows, midtones and highlights of a channel on the background image; the image laid over the top will then mimic its contours convincingly.



step > 12 Open the file named *text.psd*. Set white as your background colour in the Fill box and hit **Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + Delete** to change the colour to white. Then drag it onto your canvas, set the blend mode to Screen and opacity to 40 per cent. Place the image above the surfer, then make a copy, scale it down and place it to the left of the surfer. Make another copy and change the colour to green. Set this copy's blend mode as Normal and change the opacity to 10 per cent.



step > 13 Finally, open the file *circles.psd*. Set white as your background colour in the fill box and click **Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + Delete** to change colour to white. Then drag it onto your canvas, set the blend mode to Screen and the opacity to 40 per cent. Place it above the surfer, then make a copy, and scale down and place a few more. Now you're done! **DigitalArts**

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WHO

ALEXIS WEST

Alexis West is a freelance illustrator who specializes in character-based work. His projects have included record covers for Atlantic Records and Sony BMG; he also produces limited-edition prints and even a figurine featuring his characters, which can be seen at his Web site. "After getting a great taste for the creative industries, I decided to put together a Web site for my foremost passion - character art," he says.

CONTACT

alexiswest.com
theswingingseesaw.com

90-THING

Adobe Illustrator
All files for this tutorial
can be found on the
cover CD.



ON THE CD

The base sketch for this tutorial can be found on the cover CD.

Creating convincing characters

Illustrator maestro Alexis West demonstrates how to magic up appealing characters using a pencil, a computer and bags of imagination.



The ability to dream up and design cool, dynamic people is a good skill for any graphic designer to have under their belt, whether you're basing whole graphic novels around them or just using them to add a quirky twist to flyers or T-shirt designs.

Character design is a great chance to really let your imagination run wild – the sky's the limit. In this tutorial, you'll learn some basic skills for converting your character from a pencil doodle to a complete, fully-coloured image – learning some crucial Illustrator skills along the way.



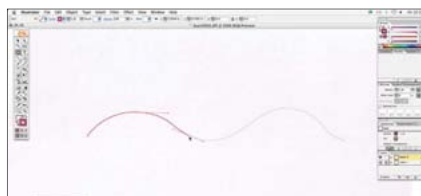
01 The best way to begin creating a character is with pencil and paper. Doodle your ideas, keeping your mind open: the results will speak for themselves. When developing your character, don't force it, let it emerge naturally: think of personality and even names. Try not to make any of these elements overly 'wacky' for the sake of it. Think of a way to further intensify emotion and expression – one of my personal stamps is that I rarely give my characters large or distinctive mouths, thus emphasizing their eyes.



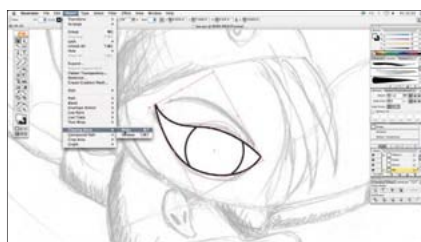
step > 02 Once you have developed a character, a great way to express their personality is to imagine a scenario that depicts a sense of narrative. My character is a bit punky, so to further emphasize this, I have developed a little scene where she is disrupting a peaceful scene. Another great way to emphasize your character is to place them in a scene that contrasts with their personality.



step > 03 Once you're happy with your character, scan in your sketch and open it in Photoshop. Go to **Image > Adjustments > Levels** and adjust the slider to correct the white to black pixel levels. Save the image, and open it in Illustrator (If you're not using your own sketch, open up sketch.jpg from the CD).



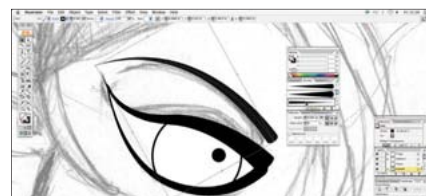
step > 04 Before starting to transform your sketch into vector graphics, get to grips with the Pen tool (**P**), as this will allow you to remain faithful to the flow of your drawing. Start by placing a point on your canvas with the pen. Now decide where you want your curve to end, place your next point in the mid point of your curve and gently pull to manipulate an arc – when you plot the next point, the curve should complete naturally.



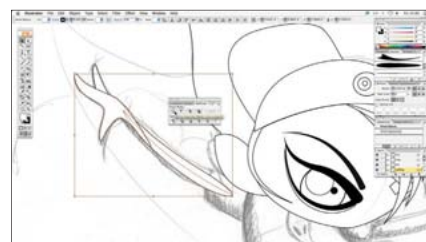
step > 05 Create a new layer above your sketch, and name it Head. Start by plotting points around the character's eye to faithfully represent your drawing, next use the Shape tool to draw a circle representing the pupil. Now copy the white of the eye shape (**Ctrl/Cmd+C**) and paste it in front of the circle (**Ctrl/Cmd+F**) Select both shapes and make a clipping mask to conceal the overspill of the circle (**Ctrl/Cmd+7**).



step > 06 Some elements of the illustration can be quite fiddly with the pen tool alone – for this sort of areas, brushes are a superb way of creating a flowing vector form. Draw a circle using the Shape tool and use the Direct Selection tool (**A**) to highlight one of the side anchor points. While holding Shift, gently pull in the opposite direction to create a tear-shape. Select the new shape and drag it into the Brushes menu; highlight New Art-Brush. Experiment with a few different shapes, and create several brushes for different details.



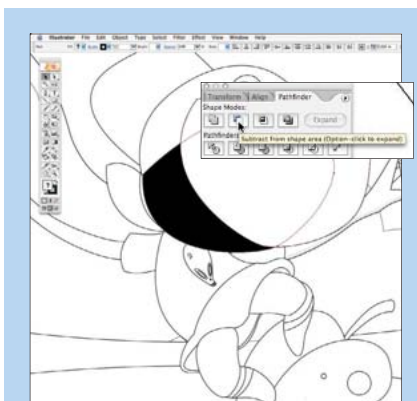
step > 07 Return to the Head layer and, using the Pen tool, plot a single flowing line that follows the curvature of the eyebrow or lashes. With the line selected, choose your custom brush and you should have a free-flowing shape that represents the eyebrow. With the eyebrow selected, go to **Object > Expand Appearance** – this will convert your path into an editable vector shape.



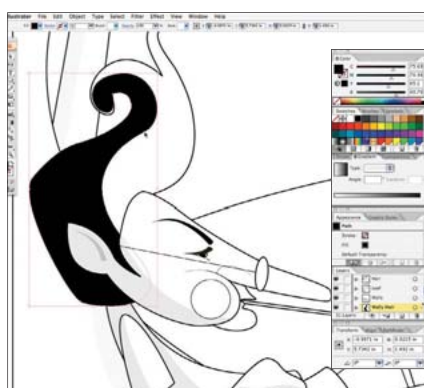
step > 08 To recreate the character's trademark flowing arms, follow Step 7's brush technique. Select the Pen tool and start tracing the character's hand, blending it into the shape of the arm. Select both the arm and the hand shapes, go to **Window > Pathfinder** and in the pathfinder window click the Add to Shape Area option. Go to **Object > Expand Appearance** to finalize the arm and hand shape.



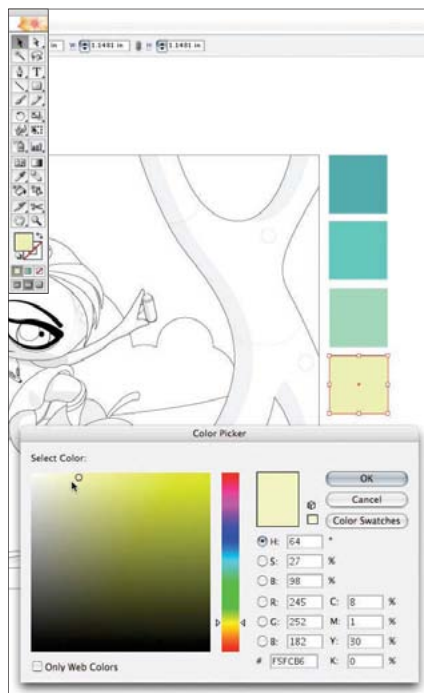
step > 09 Using all of the above techniques, finish tracing out your composition, keeping as many elements on separate layers as possible. The main advantage of using the computer is that you are free to start making subtle changes to improve your final composition. I have altered the main character making her more prominent, and enhanced the sense of flow by altering her posture slightly.



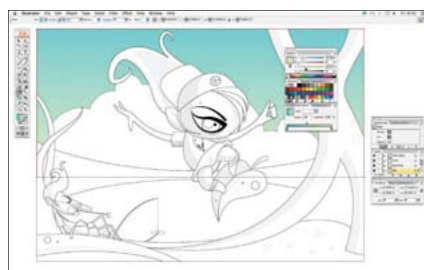
step > 10 Now it's time to give the composition some extra pop by adding shading. Select a shape in your composition – in this case I'm using the head – copy and paste it in front of the original shape and change its colour to black. Paste the shape in front once again, select the Transform tool (E) and rotate the shape until you leave a crescent to the left, select both shapes, and select the Subtract from Shape Area option in the Pathfinder palette. Go to **Object > Expand Appearance** and reduce the opacity to around 10 per cent.



step > 11 Certain elements will require different shading technique. Select a more complex shape – in this instance I'm going to use the secondary character's hair. Select the Pen tool, and following where your shadow will fall on the hair, plot a path accurately along the inside, ensuring there is a decent overflow on the outside, copy the hair shape and paste it in front of your shadow path. Select both shapes and make a clipping mask (Ctrl/Cmd+7). Reduce the opacity to around 10 per cent.



step > 12 Once the shading is complete it's time to think about colour: when choosing colour, think of the type of scene and the characters' personalities, and how colour will communicate this. Since this scene has a serene environment, a cooler palette is needed. Start by choosing a main colour (in this instance a greenish hue), select a few harmonious colours and work within this range.

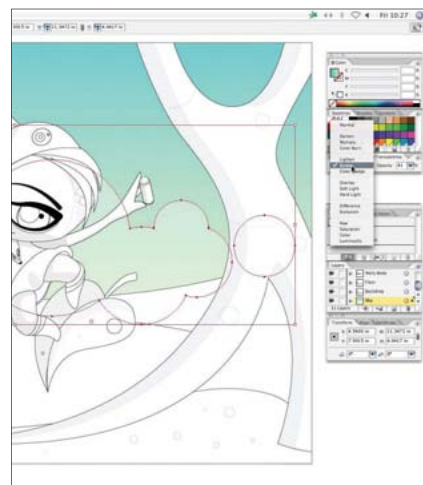


step > 13 Gradients are a great way of emphasizing colour and tone, although they're best used sparingly. Select the rectangle that represents the sky, and select your main hue to colour it. Click the Gradient swatch in the Colour palette and set to 90°. It is greyscale by default, so in the Colour palette drag the small swatch that shows your original colour into both ends of the slider, now lighten one side to a complementary light green or yellow.

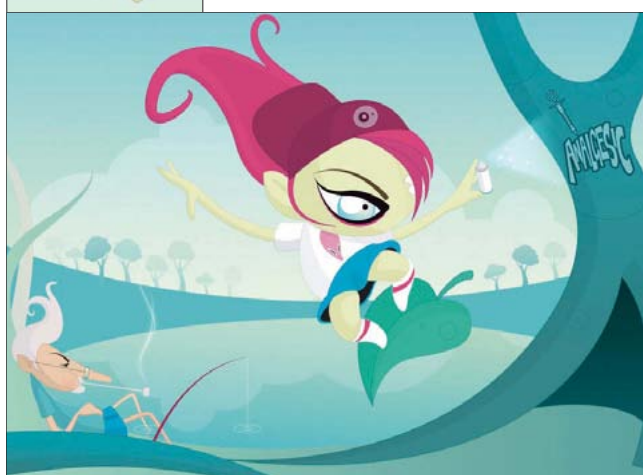
When choosing colour, think of the characters' personalities and how colour will communicate this

TIP

Illustrator lets you vary your line weights, giving them a hand-drawn feel. Use the Pen tool to trace a heavy line over your sketch, then go to **Object > Expand**. Choose **Expand Path** in the dialog box. You can then tweak each section of the line individually, to vary the line weights. This technique sometimes introduces unwanted paths; to remove them, select them with the Direct Selection tool (A) and delete.



step > 14 Select the clouds shape and repeat Step 13, this time setting the gradient orientation to -90° and setting the opacity to around 40 per cent; set the blending mode to Screen in the Opacity palette. Repeat this process for the lake beneath to create a reflection effect, further reducing the opacity.



step > 15 To add extra pop to the image and emphasize the key character, choose a range of colours that, while complementing the scene, really stand out. For the character I have coloured the hair pink: not only is this relevant to the look of the character, it also makes her stand out. Remember, stronger colours bring things forward, and cooler colours send things back positionally. DigitalArts



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Advanced track and clone in AE

Visual-effects and motion-graphics specialist Angie Taylor shows how to use After Effects' Clone Stamp tool to convincingly add to moving footage.



The Clone Stamp tool in After Effects works just like the Clone Stamp tool in Photoshop, but can be used to clone moving footage. I worked on the award-winning short film *Hibernation* with John Williams in 2005. In this scene John told me that he wanted the tree to be full of lights but that they only had enough budget to buy one set. So they thought they could 'add the rest in post'. Of

course, it's usually much better to do it in camera unless impossible due to either physics or budget.

This is a tricky shot to work on. As you can see, the camera is moving, as is the main character. And just to make it especially difficult, it was shot on 16mm so is very grainy – a visual-effects nightmare! Here's the technique that I used to track new lights onto the tree using motion tracking and Paint.

WHO



ANGIE TAYLOR
Angie's work involves producing animations, visual effects and graphics for television, film, video and the Web. Her work regularly appears on British and European TV. Recent projects include visual effects on *Hibernation*, and animations for a DVD album by Beck. She is the author of *Creative AfterEffects 7*, and she regularly tours with Adobe and Apple giving demonstrations and seminars.

CONTACT
creativeaftereffects.com

SOFTWARE
After Effects

TIME TO COMPLETE
30 minutes

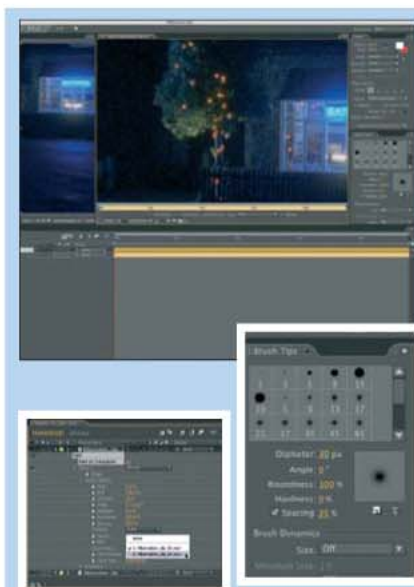


ON THE CD

All files for this tutorial can be found on the cover CD.

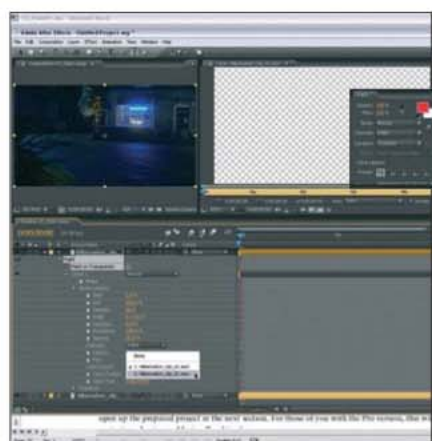


01 Open *Hibernation.aep* and RAM preview *01_Start comp*. Double-click the top *Hibernation_clip_01.mov* layer to open the Layer panel. Click the Pixel Aspect Ratio Correction button, so the footage is displayed undistorted. Choose **Workspace > Paint Workspace** and select Clone Stamp from the Tools panel (**Cmd/Ctrl+B**). Check that the settings in the Paint panel and the Brush Tips panel match those in this picture. Choose a soft-edged brush 30 pixels in diameter.

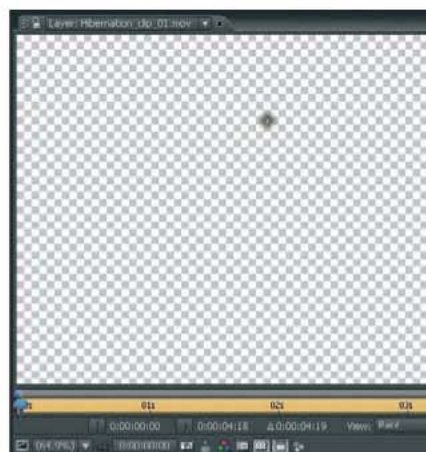


02 Hold down **Option/Alt** and click on one of the tree lights to set the source position of the Clone Stamp tool. Move to an empty part of the tree and click once to paint a new light into place. It looks good, but if you RAM preview the footage you'll see we have problems. The light isn't moving, while the footage is; we need to make the source of the paint, as well as the paint stroke, move with the tree.

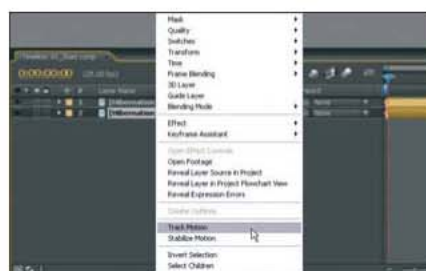
We need to animate the position of the layer so that the point follows the tree's position.



step 03 To see the paint more clearly, let's try viewing it on a transparent background. Select the top Hibernation_clip_01.mov layer and double-hit the **P** key to open the paint. Change the Paint on Transparent setting to On, and you'll see the layer and its paint disappear. Switch on the Transparency Grid button in the Layer panel to check that the paint is not visible.



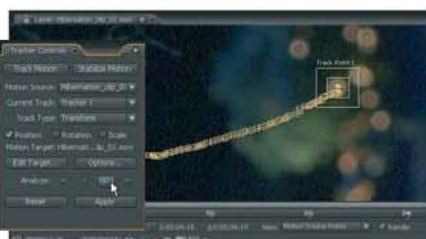
step 04 Open the Clone 1 brush and the Stroke Options. In the Clone Source menu, choose the bottom Hibernation_clip_01.mov layer. You should now see your brushstroke on a transparent background. Preview the Paint in the Layer panel – the brushstroke stays still, but its contents move. We need to get the clone source following the changing position of the light, so we'll use Motion Tracking.



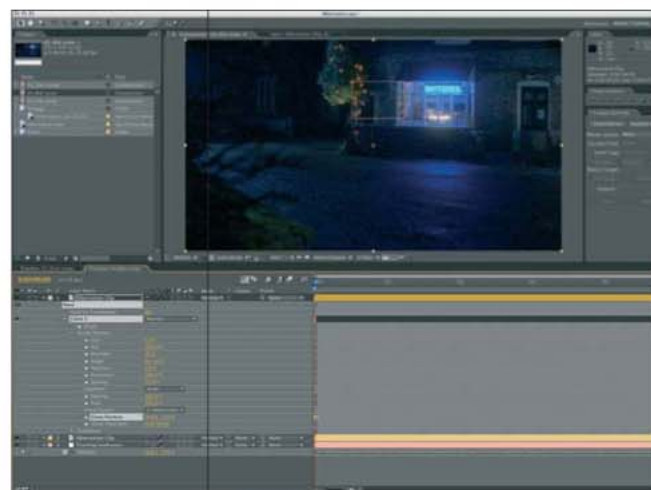
step 05 Right-click the bottom Hibernation_clip_01.mov layer and choose Track Motion from the menu. The Layer panel will open and a tracker point is added to the footage. Move to the beginning of the clip and use the Selection Tool to position the Feature Region (the innermost rectangle of the track point) around the light you chose as the source; resize it to fit snugly around the light. Make sure you don't drag the Feature Center crosshair in the middle of the Feature Region.



step 06 Make the Search Area box (the Track Point's outer rectangle) small enough that it does not include any other lights, as this will confuse tracking.



step 07 In the Tracker Controls panel, click on Analyze Forward, but don't apply the tracker. You can't apply tracking data directly to paint strokes, so we'll use an expression to apply keyframe data to the paint.



step 08 Open the comp named 02_Mid Comp from the Project panel. This comp contains a layer named Tracker Keyframes, which has the tracked keyframes stored in the Position property. In the Timeline, select the bottom layer and then hit **U** to open keyframes. Select the top layer in the timeline, open Clone 1 brush and open Stroke Options.



TIP

If you make a layer transparent, it also makes the source transparent, so any point on the layer disappears. The solution is to take the paint source from another identical layer.

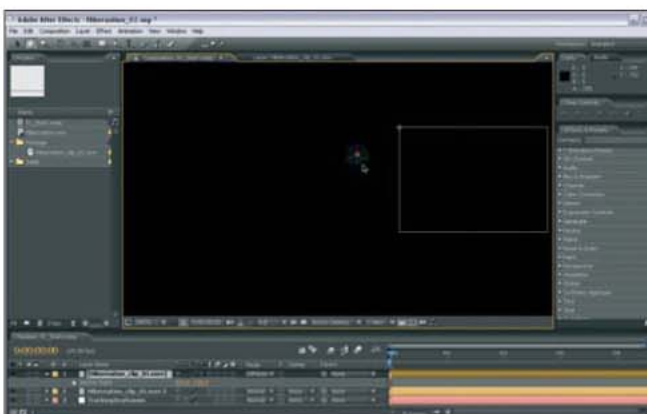
step 09 Select **Clone Source > Clone Position** in Stroke Options, and go to **Animation > Add Expression**. Drag the Expression Pickwhip to the Position property on the bottom layer and release when it highlights. Hit the **Enter** key on the number pad to activate the expression. Preview; notice that the paint displays the light throughout the duration of the comp, but the paint stroke is not following the tree. We also need to animate the position of the layer so that the paint follows the tree's position.



step 10 Select the top layer and hit **P** to open its Position property. Option/Alt-click the Position property stopwatch to add an expression. Drag the Expression Pickwhip from the top layer Position property onto the bottom layer.



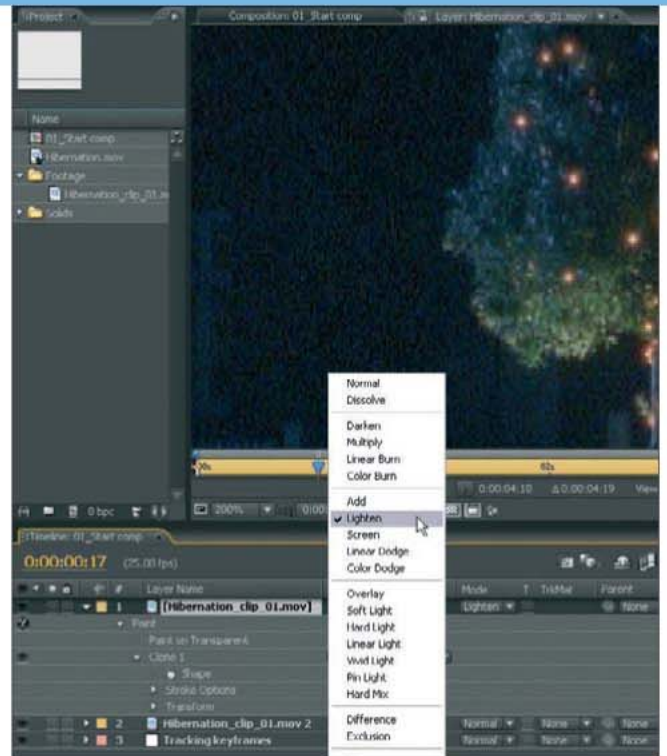
step 11 Activate the expression but before previewing, select the top layer again and this time, double-hit the **P** key to open the Paint. Switch off Paint on Transparent so that you can see the whole layer.



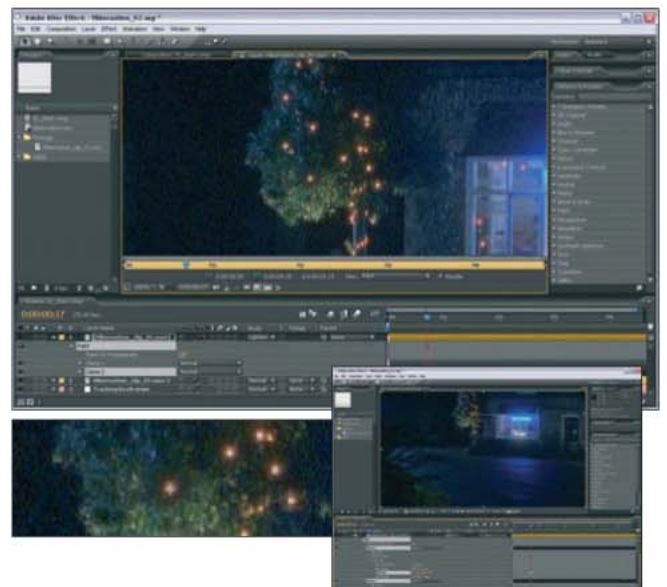
step 12 Preview – note that the anchor point of the top layer follows the lights on the tree. We need to align the layers, using Difference Mode. When it's lined up exactly, the image should be completely black except for any differences between the layers. Change the top layer to Difference mode in the Timeline's Modes column, and line up layers by nudging the **Transform > Anchor Point** value in the Timeline. This will not affect the Position expression and will keep everything relative.

TIP

Switch on Paint on Transparent and open the Comp panel to preview the lights on the tree.



step 13 Once the images are matched up, change Difference mode to Normal, then switch Paint on Transparent on again. Preview the comp panel to see one new light composited onto the tree. Double-click the top layer to open the Layer panel. You'll see the light against a transparent background. Switch off Paint on Transparent to see the light composited against the original layer. Select the new light (named Clone 1) and change its blending mode to Lighten. This works well as it emphasizes lighter areas and ignores darker edges of the cloned light.



step 14 Hit **Cmd/Ctrl+D** to duplicate the selected light. Select the new light (Clone 2) in the Timeline. In the Layer panel you will see the light represented by a small crosshair icon when it is selected. Click and drag the new light to a new location on the tree. Repeat this process to fill your tree with new, duplicated lights; change the size of the clone brush to make the effect more random.



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- ★★★★★ Above average with some flaws
- ★★★★★ Average
- ★★★★★ Below par with serious limitations
- ★★★★★ Fundamentally flawed
- ★★★★★ Lacks any redeeming features
- ★★★★★ Avoid



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PRINT VISUALIZATION SOFTWARE

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Pre-press hard proofing is a pain in the neck, involving time, effort, expense and, all too often, frustration at inconclusive results. Anything that helps in this area is to be welcomed with open arms.

Until recently, one product reigned supreme in this field – and it wasn't RealVue3D. This package's publisher, FFEI, must be clicking its heels for joy at the moment: Stonecube, which had previously dominated the ultra-specialized print-finish visualizer market, recently sold up to Esko, the major pre-press software player.

Stonecube's product, PrintDevizor, was terrific, allowing one to view standard print, special inks and decorative finishes in photo-realistic 3D environments with true lighting conditions. Esko, though, has subsumed PrintDevizor's tasty technologies into a piece of product-design visualization software called Visualizer, and in the process has jettisoned Stonecube's print-design focused visualization features. This means that FFEI's RealVue 3D has now clambered to the top of this highly specialized market.

Where PrintDevizor was a standalone application, RealVue3D is a modular plug-in for Acrobat Professional that produces platform-independent Java files, allowing any computer user to display the print document. It is based on a PDF workflow, and built to meet the pre-press visualization needs of design studios, creative agencies, in-house marketing departments, printers and publishers.

Its functionality includes: a full range of paper texture and weight (from 80 to 400gsm); colour simulations; folding options; different choices of lighting (ambient, spot, colour, temperature), background colour and binding options; control

over spot colour; varnish simulation with controllable density; and embossing, foil and metallic ink simulation.

Until the middle of January, RealVue Designer was £795, which might have proved prohibitively pricey for many. However, a Pro version of RealVue is due for imminent release, adding the ability to simulate complex fold designs. FFEI has also repositioned Designer, pricing it at £395, which should bring it within the reach of a larger audience. A wise move.

The 'big sell' from the creators of RealVue 3D is that it "dramatically improves the communication, time and sales effectiveness of job pitching and print expectation", and in essence this is true.

3D viewing options

RealVue's 3D viewing features are what you pay for here: its 3D representation of a given PDF can be rotated in all directions, allowing the viewer to analyze how chosen print effects (such as spot varnishes) will behave in certain lighting conditions. Having control over lighting conditions is important with this kind of simulation software, and RealVue offers indoor and outdoor lighting options.

Being able to visualize how a print finish behaves while 'thumbing' through a publication is a nice touch, and for additional ease of access individual pages can be accessed from a Mac OS X-style dock.

RealVue3D can also import multiple PDFs into a single simulation document, so users can demonstrate across-the-board design and marketing solutions (such as brochures, print adverts and direct mailings) to clients. It could also be used as a PDF soft-proofing tool, for checking bleeds, image placement and the like.

The other major plus of



RealVue3D Designer is that its simulations are software-independent Java files, so you'll never encounter compatibility problems when sending mock-ups electronically for clients to view. Clients can also access all of RealVue's features for viewing the publication, such as page turning, rotation and zoom.

This is great for designers and printers, as it enables them to demonstrate the pros and cons of various print options to clients.

One area in which we feel RealVue3D Designer falls short is its flexibility. Owners of PrintDevizor are unlikely to be impressed; RealVue costs £200 more, yet it merely enables one to view a print product in 3D against a solid-colour background.

PrintDevizor, though, allowed users to quickly and easily stack and re-stack a dizzying array of print finishes against immersive, photo-realistic backgrounds – including offices, airports and outdoors – thus painting real-world 3D pictures of how almost any print product would appear in key environments. In short, PrintDevizor was a pre-press prism, allowing for speedy, immersive print-effects experimentation, while RealVue3D is simply a mirror, reflecting a single set of print options.

That said, much of what was good about PrintDevizor is also present in RealVue – not least the ability to view



Being able to see how a print finish will behave when 'thumbing' through a publication is something that will be welcomed by many print-based creatives.

how a publication with a given print finish and paper weight will appear in certain lighting conditions. Being able to view multi-page PDFs is a boon, too.

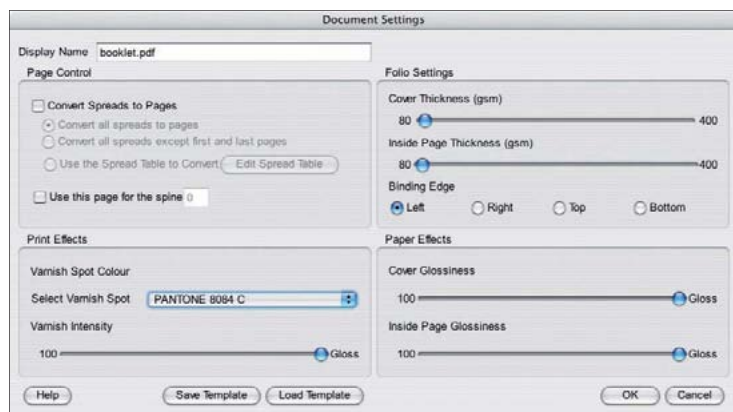
We did experience some technical difficulties, because the graphics card in our review machine was unable to handle RealVue's 3D requirements, meaning Java simulations were broken up, even at the smallest viewing sizes.

This makes us wonder if many of RealVue's potential customers will experience the same problem, because our review machine (a two-year-old 2.1GHz iMac G5 iMac with an ATI Radeon X600 XT graphics card) will be similar to those used by many of RealVue's target audience. The only option is to invest in a 3D graphics card – the extra effort and expense is

unlikely to delight many users.

What's more, the clients of RealVue's users also need a machine with a 3D graphics card to view the Java simulations. How many clients are likely to react warmly when you suggest they invest in new graphics cards because they can't view your fancy 3D soft proofs?

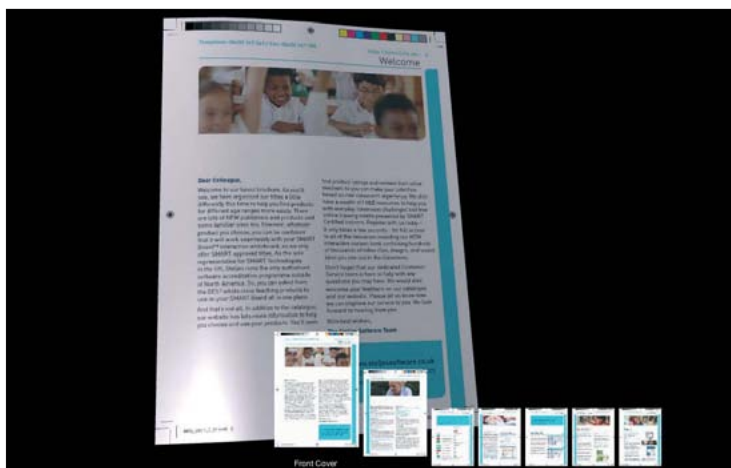
There was also an annoying file-



The Document Settings panel allows users a fair amount of flexibility when specifying paper thickness and gloss, for covers as well as inside pages. It's possible to view pages individually, or as bound spreads.



Pages can be rotated in all directions on an axis, allowing one to visualize how finishes such as spot varnishes and metallic inks will behave in varying lighting conditions, as well as to gauge the best paper weights.



Pages are displayed in an OSX-style gallery, allowing users to scroll through the document with ease.

naming glitch: when creating a new Java visualization, the file name reverts to that of the first Java visualization created in the session, instead of being based on the file name of the parent PDF; this resulted in a number of unwanted before we realized what was happening.

But let's put quibbles about functionality and glitches to one side, because the bottom line is that relying on RIPs for pre-press proofing is an expensive and time-consuming affair. With PrintDevizor's demise, RealVue is the only pre-press publication visualization software to offer an affordable and flexible alternative to hard proofing. On this basis, we commend it to you.

Sean Ashcroft

SCORE: ★★★★★

Contact details

FFEI, www.realvue3d.com, 01442 213 440

Info/System requirements

format: Mac OS X 10.4, Windows XP/Vista

price: Presenter £95 plus VRT; Designer £395 plus VRT; Pro price tbc

Summary

pros: Realistic 3D visualizations of inks, special finishes and substrates; far less expensive and quicker than inkjet proofing in the long term.

cons: Lacks flexibility; requires 3D graphics card; file-naming defaults require attention.



Above *RealVue 3D lacks the photo-realistic backgrounds of PrintDevizor, but still offers a range of lighting and background colour options, showing how inks will behave in different conditions.*

Below *Several documents can be uploaded simultaneously, in PDF format.*



A3+ PHOTO INKJET PRINTER

Stylus Photo R1900

The Stylus Photo R1900 is an A3+ desktop printer with pigment-based inks, advanced paper-handling capabilities and some handy features aimed at creatives and photographers.

Unlike the pricier Stylus Photo R2400, which is best known for its black-&-white printing capabilities (and its voracious appetite for ink), the R1900 is designed primarily to produce optimal colour prints.

The R1900 uses a reformulated inkset, called UltraChrome Hi-Gloss 2, consisting of eight individual inks: the gloss optimizer, matte and photo black, and cyan, magenta, yellow, red and orange. Epson claims that the orange ink, which replaces blue in the original Hi-Gloss inks, increases the printer's overall gamut and provides improved flesh tones.

In conjunction with the new inks, the R1900 incorporates a new colour imaging technology, Radiance. According to Epson, Radiance provides an advanced colour gamut; better ink efficiency; reduced grain; and minimized metamerism failure.

The R1900's print handling is as good as that of the R2400: it will print photos from 4-x-6-inch to

13-x-44-inch. The R1900 supports up to 13-inch rolls and has an input tray for handling thicker fine art papers.

The R1900's glossy prints were as good as, if not better than, the best dye-based glossy prints. And, while the R1900 is optimized for glossy papers, the inclusion of matte black ink means that its output on matte paper types should be very good as well. Unlike the R2400, which requires you to swap out the matte and photo black inks when you change paper types, the R1900 has separate channels for each black ink, using the appropriate ink for the paper you've chosen in the print driver.

Without the light black inks, you won't get the rich, deep tonal range of the R2400 when printing black-&-white images, but the R1900's black-&-white output should still be passable for most people.

Epson is tossing around words like "sellable" and "gallery-quality" when referring to the R1900 output. While we might look in askance at those claims – after all, the R1900 is a six-colour inkjet – the R1900 does look like a solid improvement over an already good printer.

Rick LePage

SCORE: ★★★★★

Contact details

Epson, www.epson.co.uk, 0871 222 6702

Info/System requirements

format: Mac OS X 10.3/4/5, Windows 2000/XP/Vista,

price: £340 plus VAT

Summary

pros: Excellent glossy output; detailed, attractive output

cons: Six-colour ink system, matte output not as good as rivals.



GRAPHICS WORKSTATION

xw4600

In contrast to the hulking CAD2 Vision DQX-SE, HP's latest workstation is a svelte tower, no larger than a traditional office computer. Even for a single-processor model, the xw4600 has a dinky chassis that will slip under even the smallest desk – and it's well-designed, too.

The xw4600's design isn't about aesthetics – its mix of dull grey and black wouldn't look out of place on an accountant's desk. Where it excels is in the sheer amount that HP has managed to cram into its shell. The chassis has three external 5.25-inch bays, four internal 3.5-inch bays and an external 3.5-inch bay. Our test model had a 16x DVD±RW drive, a single 500GB hard drive, and a media card reader in the external drive bay – so you could easily add three more hard drives, or five if you converted the two spare 5.25-inch bays.

This is excellent compared to Dell's rival Precision T3400, which is equally petite but has two fewer bays. HP has achieved this by positioning the drives sideways from the front, which makes it easier to add or remove drives. The whole system is screwless too, which

makes changing drives a breeze.

You can add more fast storage using the eSATA port, and there are numerous USB 2.0 ports, too.

Our test xw4600 included a 2.4GHz Intel Core 2 Q6600 processor, which is not a new chip. We reviewed CAD2's Imagine X64, which had the faster 2.66GHz version, back in November – but HP does offer the 2.93GHz Core 2 Extreme as an option.

In our Cinebench R10 rendering test, the xw4600 performed as we'd expect considering the chip – producing a score that was about four per cent slower than the Imagine X64.

The xw400's slower performance was more noticeable in our After Effects test, where its single, 7,200rpm hard drive was at a disadvantage against the X64's 10,000rpm system drive and separate media drive.

The slower drive system is also the reason the xw4600 trails the X64 in our Photoshop test, even though they both have 4GB RAM.

Even so, the quad-core processor is a powerful beast, and few creatives will complain about its performance.

The ATI Fire GL V5600 is a more powerful 3D card than the X64's nVidia



SCORE: ★ ★ ★ ★

Contact details

HP, www.hp.com/uk
0870 241 1485

Info

format: Windows XP

price: £1,051 plus VAT

Summary

pros: Small but capacious and well-designed case; very low cost; excellent graphics card

cons: Single drive reduces performance.



The xw4600's internal layout is clean, with everything easy to access.

Test results

The xw4600 has a 2.4GHz Core 2 Quad Q6600 processor, 4GB RAM and an ATI FireGL V5600 graphics card. The Imagine X64 has a 2.66GHz Core 2 Quad chip, 4GB RAM and an nVidia Quadro FX 1700. The Vision DQX-SE has dual 3.16GHz Xeon X5460 chips, 8GB RAM and an ATI FireGL V8600. The QX3 has dual 3.16GHz Xeon X5460 chips, 8GB RAM and an ATI FireGL V8650.

For Photoshop, After Effects and Maya tests, shorter bars indicate better performance; for the Cinebench tests, longer bars are better. Blue bars indicate the best-performing machine.

TEST	HP xw4600	CAD2 Imagine X64	CAD2 Vision DQX-SE	Armari QX3
Photoshop CS3	5mins 36s	5mins 20s	3mins 23s	3mins 23s
After Effects CS3	4mins 26s	4mins 5s	2mins 57s	2mins 56s
Cinebench rendering	8,624 (3.5x)	9,001 (3.4x)	23,431 (6.04x)	23,457 (6.09x)
Cinebench real-time 3D	5,353	5,270	7,399	7,401
Autodesk Maya 8.5	64s	77s	54s	54s

3D WORKSTATION

Vision DQX-SE

CAD2's latest workstation features an almost identical spec to the Armari QX3 that we looked at in our last issue. The core differences are the choice of graphics card and the price.

Like the QX3, the DQX-SE is built around two quad-core Xeon X5460 processors, which run at 3.16GHz. In our CPU-based Cinebench R10 rendering test, the two models' scores were near identical (see below left for test scores) – and the best we've seen.

Surprisingly the two models' scores in our After Effects rendering tests were one second different, and their Photoshop results were identical. Again, the scores were the best ever, with both models delivering performance in creative applications that everyone would love to have.

Where the DQX-SE wins overall is with the inclusion of AMD's ATI FireGL V8600 graphics card, which the same as the QX3's V8650 but with 1GB RAM to the V8650's 2GB. In our real-time 3D tests, the QX3 only pulled ahead of the DQX-SE in ridiculously complex scenes.

The inclusion of the V8600 is the main reason the DQX-SE is £150 less

expensive than the QX3. The price would be lower if the cards were the only difference, but the DQX-SE has two hard drives to the QX3's one.

The DQX-SE's case is rather ugly – a mess of brushed black metal and wire mesh – but it's large and spacious inside, with nine drive bays and well laid-out. It's very quiet, too.

The power button is on the top, oddly, so it's almost as if it's designed to be hidden under your desk.

If your 3D or VFX demands make spending £4,000 on a workstation, the DQX-SE is an excellent choice.

Neil Bennett

SCORE: ★★★★★

Contact details

**CAD2, www.cad2.co.uk
0800 180 4801**

Info

format: Windows XP 64-bit

price: £3,995 plus VAT

Summary

pros: Very powerful for rendering; image processing and real-time 3D; spacious case; quiet; great choice of graphics card.

cons: Ugly design.



15.4-INCH LAPTOP

Pegasus 670

Arriving too late for last month's laptop group test, the Pegasus 670 is an intriguing mix of power and portability – though the model supplied to us by Rock is a little underwhelming.

The Pegasus seems lighter than you'd expect from a 3kg laptop, and its curves make it smaller than its quoted size suggests. The laptop's design is plain matte black, with a glossy central section around the keyboard. It looks good from a distance, but poor finishing spoils this when you get up close.

This laptop's Cinebench R10 rendering score of 4,507 is good for a model with a 2.4GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T7700 processor – though behind the Dell Precision M4300 in our group test. It's also a lot slower than the score produced by Zoostorm's 3384-6639, which has a 2.8GHz T7800 chip.

The 670's scores in After Effects and Photoshop were very poor – taking almost twice as long as laptops with the same chip. This is because it has only a single GB of RAM, while most models for creative pros have at least 2GB, if not the 4GB maximum.

The price difference between 1GB and 2GB of RAM isn't all that great,

but the performance variation is significant.

Delivering a real-time Cinebench score of under 3,000, the Pegasus 670's nVidia GeForce 8600M GT graphics chip is a weak addition. It doesn't drain much power compared to higher-end chips, though, helping the 670 attain a lengthy battery life of 184 minutes – which was only beaten last month by the HP Compaq 8510w mobile workstation.

The 670 has a great 1,680-x-1,050 screen and a large 160GB hard drive, but you'd need to add at least another gigabyte of RAM before using it for pro-level creative applications.

Neil Bennett

SCORE: ★★★

Contact details

**Rock, www.rockdirect.com
0845 688 0501**

Info

format: Windows Vista Home Premium

price: £1,020.42 plus VAT

Summary

pros: Powerful processor; excellent screen; large hard drive; long battery life

cons: Limited RAM reduces performance dramatically; poor finish on design; weak graphics chip.





Digital Resources Officer £20-£22K

QUAD is Derby's new £10 million centre for Art and Film, currently under construction in the city centre and due to be complete in Summer 2008. QUAD will house two independent cinema screens, two contemporary art gallery spaces, a cafe bar and a host of workshop and digital facilities. When open, QUAD will make Art and Film accessible to everyone.

This is an exciting time in the development of QUAD and we are looking for a motivated individual who is keen for new experience and responsibility.

Working as part of the Participation Team you will develop and manage the production facilities at QUAD, including the digital studio and edit suite. You will develop and manage a programme of classes and courses as well as supporting activities within the wider creative programme.

You must have at least 2 years experience of working with a wide range of digital media production equipment and experience of delivering IT courses and classes.

Deadline for applications: 28 February 2008

Interview date: 7 March 2008

For an application pack please contact:

Louise Rowley

Q Gallery, 35-36 Queen Street, Derby, DE1 3DS

Tel: 01332 295858

Email: louiser@derbyquad.co.uk

Or download details from www.derbyquad.co.uk



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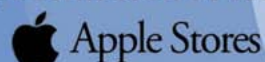
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DIGITAL-IMAGING SOFTWARE

DxO Optics Pro 5



As automatic image-quality enhancement software goes, DxO Optics Pro stands out from the crowd with its user-installed base of camera and lens correction profiles. The addition of lens look-up profiles helps correct inherent optical defects such as vignetting, distortion and chromatic aberration, but it's DxO Labs' astute auto-correction and superb colour rendition that makes Optics Pro such a powerful tool.

Left to its own devices, Optics Pro will automatically correct and process batches of Raw files that may well have different camera and lens combinations; correction isn't limited to Raw files, so even JPEGs can benefit. But there's so much more to Optics Pro than that.

Batch processing using one or more presets can provide the user with some control over the process and, naturally, single Raw files can be converted and corrected individually using nothing more than a slider or the occasional eye-dropper.

However, users of previous versions have had to endure an unintuitive interface with enough idiosyncrasies to make the learning curve steeper than necessary, and, unlike rival tools, conversion and correction have been fiddly, time-consuming processes.

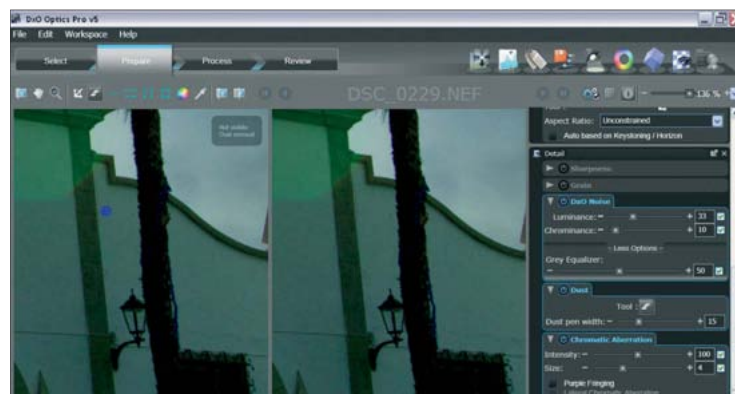
Version 5.0 addresses these problems specifically, although it's currently only available for Windows users – a Mac edition will follow. The developer states that version 5.0 has seen a pretty dramatic decrease in conversion times – it's claimed to be up to four times faster than version 4.5. This is all thanks to an entire rewrite using .NET and utilizing GPU processing where a dedicated video card is installed.

Although we couldn't see a vast improvement in rendering or development times with our laptop, version 5.0 delivered some slightly cleaner-looking files compared to version 4.5, with noise reduction applied before conversion and, crucially, a new demosaicing algorithm that adopts non-local interpolation.

Spot removal

In spite of the anti-dust systems appearing on digital SLRs, cleaning up Raw images is still a necessary task for photographers. Version 5's new spot blemish feature is, therefore, a welcome addition, especially if you intend to use the utility as a standalone application.

The interface has undergone a cosmetic transformation. It's pretty



Version 5 focuses more on improvements to existing tools than on introducing new ones, but the spot and blemish removal function is a welcome addition especially to those using Optics Pro as a standalone application.

slick-looking, but stops short of being a significant improvement over the previous offering. While we appreciate the row of shortcuts, the workspace is still a little cramped compared with Adobe Lightroom, and it's not as user-friendly as Phase One's Capture One 4.

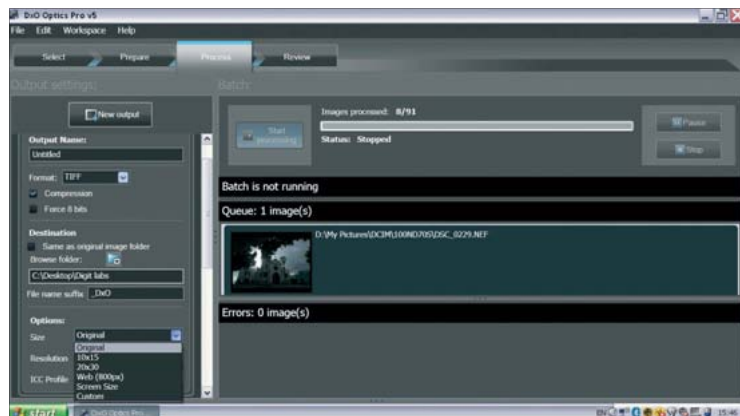
Nevertheless, we like the simplification of the output settings during processing, especially dropping the project option and allowing the user to choose an output folder. This sounds simple, but the layout of version 4.5 was unnecessarily complicated.

That said, there's still some work to be done on selecting output image size. It's fine if you think in terms of

pixel dimensions, but it would be better to add more than just the two print sizes.

While we rate Optics Pro highly, for Pentax, Sony or Olympus users, compatibility is thin. Camera and lens support is focused on the two main players, Canon and Nikon – and even then there are some obvious absences. Lens modules are free to download, but if you're a user of pro-spec cameras, such as the EOS 1D series or Nikon D2 range, you'll need to purchase the more expensive Elite package. And, at £169 without added functionality, this seems like quite a jump.

Joanne Carter



We couldn't see much improvement over conversion and processing times but the output window is less confusing than version 4.5. Print size options are rather limited, though.



Support is wide-ranging for Canon and Nikon models, but other models don't fare as well.

SCORE: ★★★★★

Contact details

**DxO Labs, www.dxo.com
Alpha Digital Services, 01189 33700**

Info/System requirements

format: Windows XP/Vista (Mac version due early 2008)

price: Standard edition £84 plus VAT, Elite £169 plus VAT


Summary

pros: Excellent tools for batch processing Raw files; superb colour rendition.

cons: Somewhat fiddly downloading experience; limited lens and camera profiles; lacks compatibility for some makes

EXTERNAL STORAGE

Drobo

 Data Robotics describes the Drobo as 'the world's first storage robot', but it's actually a hard drive enclosure with some nifty built-in technology that makes securely backing up your projects a doddle. This unique product has been well-received in the US, and is now available in the UK.

The Drobo is a toaster-sized box with a reasonably attractive gloss black finish. The front pops off to reveal four drive bays that accept the same standard 3.5-inch hard drives you'd find in a desktop computer. Fill these bays up, and the Drobo automatically formats them and creates one virtual drive that appears on the Mac desktop or My Computer on Windows systems.

The unit accepts different-sized drives, and the capacity of the Drobo is equal to somewhere between half and two-thirds of the total capacity of the drives – depending on the sizes. The spare space is used to keep a secure version of your data, so if any of the drives fail you won't lose anything.

This is similar to many desktop RAID drives on the market, but where the Drobo excels is that it takes care of all of the mechanics behind the scenes, so you don't have to know anything about RAID systems to use it. This is excellent, as setting up and maintaining RAID arrays is both complex and incredibly dull.

Most RAID setups require identically sized drives to work, but the Drobo's mix-and-match approach is much more flexible. You'd probably set up the Drobo with identical drives originally – but if you run out of space



**DigitalArts
Best Buy**

you can slip in one or two higher-capacity drives to boost its capacity. Also, if one drive fails, you can pop in any 3.5-inch drive you have to hand to keep your data secure.

Changing a drive is as simple as popping a latch, pulling out the drive and pushing in a new one – there are no drive bays or attachments to slow the process. The Drobo then rearranges your data across the drives. This may take a while, but you can still access your data in the process.

Copying data to and from the

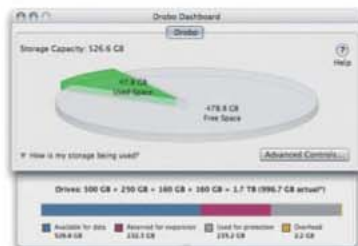
Drobo is slow, but the unit is designed to be a backup drive, not for directly working off. The single USB 2.0 interface is a bit limiting; Serial ATA would provide faster access. A recently announced companion, DroboShare (£119 plus VAT), allows the Drobo to be accessed across networks.

Data Robotics doesn't include any backup software, just a basic console to show how full it is, if any drives have failed, and some basic tools. You don't need to refer to the console often, though, as the lights on the front of

the unit provide a quick guide to its status. Each drive has its own light, showing either green (working), yellow (almost full) or red (replace) – and there's a line of blue LEDs along the bottom that light up as the unit fills up.

The Drobo is the best new storage device we've seen in a long time, making secure backup simple – at last.

Neil Bennett



Left A latch system makes changing drives a breeze, and the Drobo accepts different-sized drives. Above, right The ingeniously simple device comes with similarly uncomplicated software.



SCORE: ★★★★★

Contact details

Data Robotics,
www.drobo.com, 001 650 526 3600

Info/System requirements

format: Mac OS 10.4/5, Windows 2000/
XP/Vista

price: £299 plus VAT

Summary

pros: Most easy-to-use secure backup system yet. Very flexible.

cons: Limited connection options. No backup software.

**What do ambitious
Web engineers do
with too much time
on their hands?**

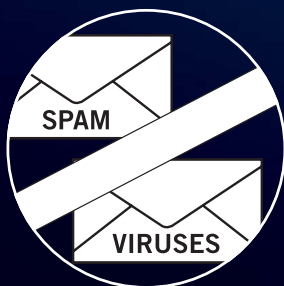
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Apple 30-inch Cinema HD Display, Dell UltraSharp 3007WFP-HC, Eizo FlexScan SX3031W, HP LP3065, Samsung SyncMaster 305T

30-inch LCD monitors

A really, really big screen makes designing a joy - and they're getting cheaper all the time. Digital Arts puts the latest 30-inch monitors through their paces.

words: Neil Bennett



Every creative wants a 30-inch monitor - and with prices currently little more than £1,000, this is the ideal time to pick one up. Owning one isn't just about showing off to your colleagues how important you are (though it's an added bonus) but a larger monitor will help you be more productive.

It's not really about size: resolution is what matters here. A larger size allows more pixels without making the user's eyes hurt by forcing them to squint.

The majority of 30-inch displays, including all the models we've looked at here, have a native resolution of 2,560-x-1,600 for a total of 4.1 million pixels. By contrast, most 23- to 26-inch monitors offer 2.3 million pixels (1,920-x-1,200), and most widescreen 20- and 21-inch displays have 1.8 million pixels (1,680-x-1,050).

The extra resolution means you can see your work in more detail. A 300dpi A3 landscape image (or spread of A4 portrait pages) can be viewed at 25 per cent on a 23-26-inch monitor. On a 30-inch display, you can see it at 50 per cent - and the ability to see a more accurate representation of how your work will look helps you to design more efficiently and spot problems quicker. Editors and artists working with HD video can see video within their applications at 100 per cent, and see more of their timeline.

Creatives working in 3D will see one downside to a 30-inch display: the extra resolution puts more strain on your graphics card, reducing the frame rate. However, such artists can designate a portion of their display

A larger size allows more pixels without making the user's eyes hurt by forcing them to squint

for their core 3D application, using the full resolution when working on detailed textures in Photoshop, for example.

The best 30-inch monitors offer 10-bit or higher colour processing (see Tech Notes, page 73), but there isn't the big divide between pro-level and gamer-focused displays as with smaller monitors - almost all 30-inch models for desktop use are aimed at creative professionals. There are 30-inch displays available for medical imaging and presentation, but these are sold through different channels and creative pros are unlikely to encounter them.

All 30-inch displays require a graphics card that supports Dual Link, as this technology is necessary for resolutions larger than 1,920-x-1,200. However, most recent graphics cards support Dual Link, and the only models available today that don't support it are the true entry-level cards.

Alongside DVI connectors, many displays include a USB 2.0 hub for easy attachment of peripherals and drives. Apple's 30-inch Cinema HD Display also offers a FireWire hub, while Dell's UltraSharp 3007WFP-HC offers a selection of media card slots for quickly taking images off digital cameras.





Apple 30-inch Cinema HD Display

If you want a 30-inch monitor to flaunt in front of your colleagues while also colour co-ordinating with your Mac, this Cinema HD Display is the model. It's also an impressive display if you want a balance of price and performance, although it's neither a bargain like HP's LP3065 nor bursting with features like Eizo's FlexScan SX3031W.

The 30-inch Cinema HD Display's clean design makes it thin and light. Though the curved metal plank of a base only permits the screen to be tilted towards and away from you, the whole monitor is light enough to swivel if you need to let a colleague or a client get up close to see your work.

Like Samsung's SyncMaster 305T, the screen sits low on your desk, although you can buy a plastic base.

A single cable snakes away from

the back of the monitor, which carries the DVI, power, USB 2.0 and FireWire cables within it. It terminates with the standard connectors, plus a power lead with a separate power adaptor.

The only controls on the Cinema HD Display are for brightness, and a power button – though if you're connected to a Mac, it tries to shut the machine down when pressed, rather than just shutting off the monitor. The colour profiles for the monitor are built into Mac OS X, but none are provided for Windows, so Windows users must have a calibrator to use the screen with any hope of colour accuracy.

Before calibration, we found the monitor's colours to be wide of the mark, but after profiling the Cinema HD Display gave a far more accurate performance, though lacking the colour depth of the SX3031W.



Dell UltraSharp 3007WFP-HC

While the rest of the models we've looked at here are focused on the professional creative market, the UltraSharp 3007WFP-HC has one eye on the high-end gamer/home entertainment market too. The 2,560-x-1,600 resolution is beyond the capabilities of most games, but Dell's monitor is better at downscaling to 1,920-x-1,200 than any of its rivals. It features support for HDCP (High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection), so HD video from HD DVD and Blu-Ray Disc format media can be played. The only other monitor here that supports HDCP is Eizo's FlexScan SX3031W.

As you'd expect from a monitor partly aimed at entertainment, the 3007WFP-HC is oversaturated. This makes blockbusters look impressive, but the monitor requires calibration

if you're working with print. Even so, after calibration, the 3007WFP-HC was little better than HP's LP3065 (which is £250 less expensive), and most creative pros will prefer the Apple Cinema HD Display for colour accuracy and depth.

Its design isn't going to win any prizes, but there's an adjustable base, with a decent tilt and swivel. It's also the only one with a media card reader.

Even so, there's little reason to pick the 3007WFP over the LP3065 if you're looking for value, or over the Cinema HD Display if want performance.

As *Digital Arts* went to press, Dell announced a replacement for the 3007WFP-HC called the UltraSharp 3008WFP, featuring a larger colour gamut, a 3000:1 contrast ratio, and HDMI and DisplayPort sockets for HD players and camcorders. Its UK availability has yet to be confirmed.

SCORE: ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS

Apple, www.apple.com/uk
0800 783 4846

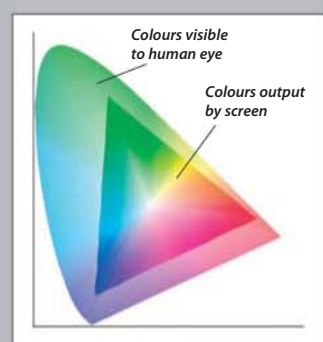
PRICE/INFO

Brightness: 400cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 700:1
Price: £1,020 plus VAT

SUMMARY

pros: Stylish and well-designed. Great performance for price.
cons: Sits low on the desk. No profiles provided for Windows users.

COLOUR GAMUT COMPARISON



SCORE: ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS

Dell, www.dell.com/uk
0870 152 4699

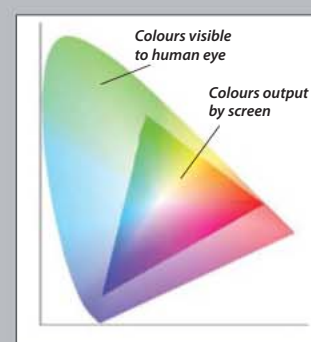
PRICE/INFO

Brightness: 300cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 1000:1
Price: £1,089 plus VAT

SUMMARY

pros: Great ergonomics.
cons: Expensive considering performance.

COLOUR GAMUT COMPARISON





Eizo FlexScan SX3031W



The FlexScan SX3031W is the first 30-inch display to offer more than eight-bit image processing for greater colour depth and more accurate colour rendering. This isn't the only reason to pay around £250 more for the SX3031W than rival models, though, as it has many appealing features – and its quality is more than worth the price.

The combination of a 12-bit Look-Up Table (LUT) and 16-bit internal processing means that the SX3031W gives a more precise representation of how your images and designs will appear on final output. Eizo's display is also capable of outputting more colours than its rivals, and the company claims that its monitor reproduces 97 per cent of the Adobe RGB colour space.

In our tests, the SX3031W's

performance lives up to its promise. It features the widest colour gamut in the group, and images appear with far better rendering of subtle shades and details, especially in very dark and light areas. Before calibration, the monitor's output was impressive; after profiling, it was near-as-damnit perfect.

The SX3031W is the only monitor here to offer a choice of colour temperature presets, which helps calibration be more accurate by altering the colour output characteristics. A simple menu gives control over colour temperature, brightness and Gamma (another feature found on the SX3031W alone).

The monitor's shell is fine but not stylish; it can swivel and has a large tilt radius, though it's rather stiff and you worry about knocking the monitor over by pushing too hard.



HP LP3065



At more than £200 less than its nearest competitor, the LP3065 is a bargain. On performance alone, it would sit at the back of our bunch, but for creatives with modest demands its low price makes it better value than its rivals.

The LP3065's black bezel gives it an appearance that's superficially similar to Samsung's SyncMaster 305T – though without any of the 305T's attractive details or class. The squat silver base is tacky and reminiscent of a cheap consumer-focused monitor – though it does offer a wide range for tilt and swivel, and allows the height of the monitor to be raised and lowered smoothly and without problems.

The monitor's original picture was luridly oversaturated – even more so than Dell's entertainment-focused UltraSharp 3007WFP-HC – to the point

where looking at highly-saturated images on it would make you nauseous. Calibration cleared this up though, revealing a picture quality that is usable, if not outstanding.

We wouldn't recommend the LP3065 to those working in print: it's no match for the colour accuracy and depth of Apple's Cinema HD Display or Samsung's 305T, and comparing it to Eizo's SX3031W just isn't fair. For creatives working in media where the output is less colour-accurate, such as Web, broadcast or DVD output, the LP3065 is more than adequate.

There are three DVI inputs on the base, which is great if you use more than one workstation.

If you're working on a very tight budget, the LP3065 offers excellent value. However, if you can afford to buy a higher-spec monitor, you should.

SCORE:

★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS

■ Eizo, www.eizo.co.uk
01483 719 500

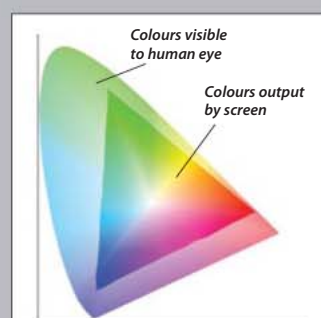
PRICE/INFO

Brightness: 260cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 900:1
Price: £1,349 plus VAT

SUMMARY

■ **pros:** Exceptional picture quality: accurate with great colour depth.
■ **cons:** More expensive than rivals. Tilt mechanism is stiff.

COLOUR GAMUT COMPARISON



SCORE:

★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS

■ HP, www.hp.com/uk
0845 270 4222

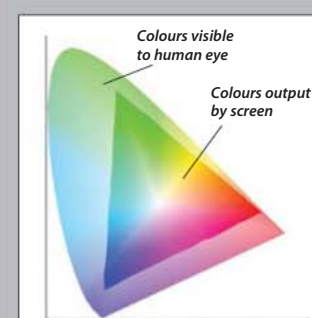
PRICE/INFO

Brightness: 300cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 1000:1
Price: £812 plus VAT

SUMMARY

■ **pros:** Very low cost. Performance good enough for video applications.
■ **cons:** Print pros will need more than the LP3065 offers.

COLOUR GAMUT COMPARISON





Samsung SyncMaster 305T

The SyncMaster 305T is never going to garner the admiring comments and jealous glances of Apple's 30-inch Cinema HD Display, but it's well-designed in an understated way, like a well-cut suit.

The frame's plain black bezel isn't much different to that found on Eizo's FlexScan SX3031W, but it has little details that give an overall impression of class. This class, however, doesn't justify the 305T costing £150 more than Apple's monitor, as in use they're very similar.

When we first plugged in the 305T into our workstation, we were impressed with its output, which was much more accurate than the Cinema HD Display and not oversaturated like many displays – though this is hardly surprising, as Apple doesn't provide profiles for its

monitors, and Samsung does. After calibration, though, there was nothing between the two monitors. Both featured a level of colour accuracy and depth that outshone the Dell and HP monitors – and both paled in comparison with the SX3031W.

Also, like the Cinema HD Display, the 305T sits low on your desk – though it is lightweight, and finding an extra base to raise it is easy. The 305T has a circular base to aid swivelling, but there's a limited field of tilt.

Other similarities between Samsung and Apple's display include limited controls and a single DVI input, which is bound to annoy if you use more than one computer.

If this model's price was nearer to £1,000, we'd have no trouble recommending it – but its current cost leaves it offering relatively poor value.



Tech notes: Deep colour

Previously, if you needed 10-bit or higher colour processing, it would have been necessary to buy a smaller monitor. Now, however, we're seeing the emergence of 30-inch models that offer this feature. LCD displays and most graphics cards output an eight-bit per colour depth (also known as 24-bit colour, as it's eight bits each for red, green and blue), so each pixel can show one of 16 million colours.

However, the colour gamuts of your monitor and your graphics card can be quite different, so the monitor needs to translate from one to the other. By having a 10-bit per colour LUT (Look-Up Table), the monitor has an internal palette of 64 million colours to help the translation, so what you see on screen is more accurate. It's with subtle shades and gradients that this is most apparent.

The first 30-inch monitor to offer a colour depth of more than 8-bit per colour is Eizo's FlexScan SX3031W, which offers 12-bit LUT for an internal palette of 256 million colours. In the next few months, rivals from NEC and Samsung should appear. NEC announced the MultiSync LCD3090WQXi at the Macworld trade show in January, which also has a 12-bit LUT.

Samsung doesn't state the internal palette for its forthcoming XL30 (above), which is the first 30-inch model with LED backlights. LED-based monitors have a wider colour gamut than conventional LCD displays, as LEDs offer more subtle gradation of brightness than standard lights. They also use less power and don't contain mercury like LCD models, so are more environmentally friendly.

SCORE:



CONTACT DETAILS

■ Samsung, www.samsung.com/uk
0800 726 7864

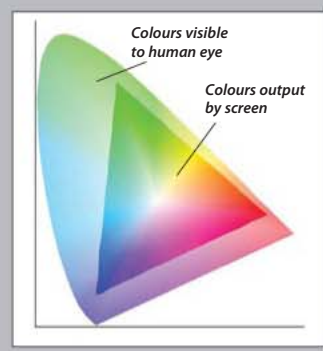
PRICE/INFO


Brightness: 400cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 1000:1
Price: £1,149 plus VAT

SUMMARY

■ pros: Classy design. Good picture quality.
■ cons: Pricey. Sits low on the desk.

COLOUR GAMUT COMPARISON



Model/Contact/Rating					
	Apple 30-inch Cinema Display www.apple.com/uk	Dell 1 UltraSharp 3007WFP-HC www.dell.com/uk	Eizo FlexScan SX3031W www.eizo.co.uk	HP LP3065 www.hp.com/uk	Samsung SyncMaster 305T www.samsung.com/uk
	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Price	£1,020 plus VAT	£1,089 plus VAT	£1,349 plus VAT	£812 plus VAT	£1,149 plus VAT
Viewable area	30-inch	30-inch	30-inch	30-inch	30-inch
Aspect ratio	16:10	16:10	16:10	16:10	16:10
Dot pitch	0.257mm	0.25mm	0.25mm	0.25mm	0.25mm
Native resolution	2,560-x-1,600	2,560-x-1,600	2,560-x-1,600	2,560-x-1,600	2,560-x-1,600
Connection	DVI	DVI-I	2X DVI-D	3X DVI-I	DVI-D
Dual-link required	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HDCP	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Response rate	14ms	8ms	6ms	6ms	6ms
Horizontal viewing angle	178 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees
Vertical viewing angle	178 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees
Brightness	400 CD/M2	300CD/M2	260CD/M2	300CD/M2	400CD/M2
Contrast ratio	700:1	1000:1	900:1	1000:1	1000:1
10-bit+ lut	No	No	12-bit	No	No
10-bit+ colour processing	No	No	16-bit	No	No
dimensions (w-x-d-x-h)	688-x-543-x-215mm	690-x-470-x-200mm	689-x-490-580-x-272mm	790-x-568-x-378mm	690-x-502-x-280mm
Weight (with base)	12.8kg	11.38kg	15.3kg	13.4kg	12kg
Colour options	Silver	Black	Grey	Black	Black
Colour temperature modes	No	No	4,000-10,000K	No	No
Speakers	No	Optional	Optional	Optional	No
Connectivity ports	2x USB 2.0, 2x FireWire	4x USB 2.0, 9-in-2 media card reader	2x USB 2.0	4x USB 2.0	4x USB 2.0
Software	Built into Mac OS X	Profiles	ScreenManager Pro for LCD	Profiles	Profiles
Specified calibrator	None	None	None	None	None
Hood	No	No	No	No	No

How we tested

Each monitor was connected to CAD2's Vision DQX-SE, which uses an ATI FireGL 8600 workstation-class graphics card. First we compared each monitor's output straight 'out of the box' – using colour profiles, where they were provided – to a calibrated test sheet.

We then calibrated each display using a GretagMacbeth Eye-One Display 2, which gives a more accurate colour profile, and we compared the output from each monitor using its calibrated profile to the test sheet.

We used Chromix ColorThink Pro to

create graphs like the one above, based on each of these calibrated profiles, providing a simple, at-a-glance guide to the colour gamut of each display. These graphs represent all the colours that the human eye is capable of seeing (the outer shape). Within this is a map of the colours each monitor can output (the inner shape).

A larger inner shape generally means a better monitor. However, it doesn't indicate how accurately these colours are rendered, which is why each monitor's output is best judged by eye.

Regular calibration is important for maintaining colour accuracy across mediums. Most creatives should invest in a pro-level calibration system, such as the Eye-One Display 2 (£125 plus VAT) or Datacolor's Spyder3Elite (£134 plus VAT). Designers should also think about a printer calibration system such as the Colour Confidence Print Profiler.

Chromix, www.chromix.com

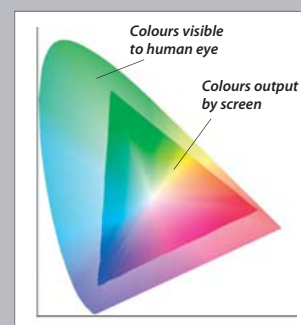
Colour Confidence,

www.colourconfidence.com

Datacolor, www.datacolor.com

GretagMacbeth, gretagmacbeth.com

COLOUR GAMUT COMPARISON



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stand C3
at Focus on
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Digital cameras

	Alpha 700	Sony	www.sony.co.uk	£851	Jan 08	★★★★★	Robust, weatherproof 12.24-megapixel digital SLR offers up to an incredible ISO 6400 and great focusing features <i>Pros:</i> Eleven-point focus detection system; impressive low-light shooting ability; useful in-camera contrast correction <i>Cons:</i> Flimsy seals; no visible seal at all around battery compartment; extra lenses use screw-type AF system
	D300	Nikon	www.nikon.co.uk	£1,106	Jan 08	★★★★★	12.2-megapixel DSLR is best in class for quality at high ISOs and for its powerful focusing system <i>Pros:</i> Amazing, if complex, 51-point AF system; extremely accurate manual focus; 8fps continuous shooting <i>Cons:</i> Finish not as impressive as the previous D200; contrast detection not great using AF
	Lumix DMC-FX100	Panasonic	www.panasonic.co.uk	£280.84	Jan 08	★★★★★	An elegantly styled 12.2-megapixel compact camera offering great control over exposure, as well as impressive sharpness <i>Pros:</i> A healthy image-capture size; arresting standard of output; solid build quality; responsive zooming features <i>Cons:</i> Lack of manual focus and a number of advanced features such as aperture- and shutter-priority; poorly designed mode dial
	EOS 40D	Canon	www.canon.co.uk	£638	Jan 08	★★★★★	With its wide range of lenses and accessories, and 14-bit RAW capture, this speedy DSLR is a well-balanced option <i>Pros:</i> Super-fast operating speed; three-inch colour monitor; anti-dust features; uprated AF system and improved low-light performance <i>Cons:</i> Only partial weatherproofing; focusing system could be more user-friendly; higher ISO performance worse than its predecessor
	E-3	Olympus	www.olympus.co.uk	£1,446	Feb 08	★★★★★	A compact and well-made successor to the pro-quality E-1, with some nifty features <i>Pros:</i> Superb handling; an impressive 11-point AF detection system; weatherproof body with anti-dust systems <i>Cons:</i> Some white balance inaccuracies exist, and there's moderate noise at ISO 1600 and above
	FE-280	Olympus	www.olympus.co.uk	£92	Jan 08	★★★★★	Ultra-affordable eight-megapixel model is a bargain but lacks manual settings and offers mediocre image quality <i>Pros:</i> Low cost; 21 scene modes; useful white balance preview mode; 2.5-inch LCD with extra-bright setting <i>Cons:</i> Manual settings include only white balance presets, ISO settings and autofocus; images can be drab and lack sharpness
	Finepix S5 Pro	Fujifilm	www.fujifilm.co.uk	£715	Jan 08	★★★★★	Sturdy and well-featured 12-megapixel SLR delivers compelling colour and impressive dynamic range <i>Pros:</i> Good for colour rendition; dynamic range can be adjusted manually; Super CCD system gives expanded dynamic range <i>Cons:</i> Poor continuous-shooting rates make it unsuited for action shots; its menu menus are not easy on the eye
	SD14	Sigma	www.sigma-imaging-uk.com	£595	Jan 08	★★★★★	Worthy eight-megapixel DSLR that offers interesting technology but ultimately lacks the feature set of its peers <i>Pros:</i> Resolving power close to eight megapixels; 2.5-inch colour monitor, continuous shooting at 3fps, sensitivity to ISO 1600 <i>Cons:</i> Plastic outer shell seems fragile compared to magnesium alloy casings of its peers; it lacks weatherproof seals



Camcorders

	GY-HD201E	JVC Professional	www.jvcproeurope.com	£3,890	May 07	★★★★★	HD camera with three CCDs, each with a native 1,280-x-720 pixels and support for a vast array of lenses <i>Pros:</i> 1/3-inch bayonet mount for swapping lenses; good number of shooting modes from 24 to 60fps; great colour capture <i>Cons:</i> Not so good with poorly-illuminated environments; the very expensive battery pack adds another £800 to the price
	HDC-SD1	Panasonic	www.panasonic.co.uk	£850	Aug 07	★★★★★	The HDC-SD1 captures and stores great quality video onto an SD Card, but lack of support from video editors lets it down <i>Pros:</i> Very small size; relatively high-quality video considering storage method; exceptional quality-to-price ratio; comfortable to hold <i>Cons:</i> Few manual controls; no pro audio inputs; limited editing support in major video applications; included software is very poor
	HV20	Canon	www.canon.co.uk	£850	Aug 07	★★★★★	The best HDV camcorder on the market for less than £1,000, with some fantastic third-party accessories <i>Pros:</i> High capture quality for sub £1,000 camcorder; wide range of accessories available <i>Cons:</i> Few manual controls; no professional audio inputs; unpleasantly tiny and fiddly buttons
	HVR-V1E	Sony	www.sonybiz.co.uk	£2,275	May 07	★★★★★	Professional HD camera using a trio of 1/4-inch CMOS sensors and captures full-resolution 25p mode, 50i and HDMI output <i>Pros:</i> Future-proof with HDMI support; Smooth Slow Record; excellent fidelity in bright conditions <i>Cons:</i> Low-light conditions result in poor performance; image quality is reduced for slow-motion filming
	XH A1	Canon	www.canon.co.uk	£2,275	May 07	★★★★★	Canon's first general-purpose HD camera that uses HDV2 (1080i), using three 1.67-megapixel CCDs <i>Pros:</i> Performs well under all conditions; and great under low light; great value for feature set <i>Cons:</i> Quite heavy at over 2kg, and the oddly placed LCD monitor is an ungenerous 2.8-inches
	XH H1	Canon	www.canon.co.uk	£4,499	May 07	★★★★★	HD successor to Canon's XL2 uses the HDV2 (1080i) format, plus great additions of HD-SDI genlock and timecode connectivity <i>Pros:</i> HD-SDI genlock, interchangeable XL optics; faithful colour capture and solid low-light performance; best video performance to date <i>Cons:</i> Slightly uncomfortable to use; small 2.4-inch monitor; pricing could be a stumbling block for many

buyers guide

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- ★★★★★ The best product in its class
- ★★★★★ Fantastic package - almost perfect
- ★★★★★ Highly recommended
- ★★★★★ Above average with some flaws
- ★★★★★ Average
- ★★★★★ Below par with serious limitations
- ★★★★★ Fundamentally flawed
- ★★★★★ Lacks any redeeming features
- ★★★★★ Avoid


Workstations

	Magnetar QX2 ★★★★★
£3,195 www.armari.co.uk	Jul 07
A whopping 8GB of RAM and powerful 3D card make for great performance	
Digital Arts Best Buy	
Imagine X64	Nov 07
CAD2, www.cad2.com	£1,465
Mac Pro	Jul 07
Rock, www.rockdirect.com	£2,857
QX3	Feb 08
Armari, www.armari.co.uk	£4,150
Xtreme 770	Jan 08
Rock, www.rock-direct.com	£1,871

Graphics cards

	ATI FireGL V5600 ★★★★★
£299 ati.amd.com	Dec 07
Can hold its own against more expensive cards	
Digital Arts Best Buy	
ATI FireGL V3600	Dec 07
ati.amd.com	£149
ATI FireGL V7600	Dec 07
ati.amd.com	£499
nVidia Quadro FX 570	Dec 07
PNY, www.pny.co.uk	£139
nVidia Quadro FX 1700	Dec 07
PNY, www.pny.co.uk	£329
nVidia Quadro FX 4600	Dec 07
PNY, www.pny.co.uk	£1,149
nVidia Quadro FX 5600	Dec 07
PNY, www.pny.co.uk	£1,919

Photo printers

	Photosmart Pro ★★★★★
£479 hp.com/uk	Oct 07
Impressive prints thanks to the Pro B9180's built-in spectrophotometer	
Digital Arts Best Buy	
Photosmart Pro B8350	Oct 07
HP, www.hp.com/uk	£255
Pixma Pro9000	Oct 07
Canon, www.canon.co.uk	£425
Pixma Pro9500	Oct 07
Canon, www.canon.co.uk	£550
Stylus Photo R800	Oct 07
Epson, www.epson.co.uk	£340

Storage

	My Book Pro ★★★★★
£89.85 wdmybook.com	Sep 07
This external hard drive offers a fantastic performance at a great price	
Digital Arts Best Buy	
3ware Sidecar	Sep 07
AMCC, www.amcc.com	£849
Brick	Sep 07
LaCie, www.lacie.com/uk	£101
Data Tank	Sep 07
FreeCom, www.freecom.com	£255
FreeAgent Pro	Sep 07
Seagate, www.seagatefreeagent.com	£151.18

Laptops

	3384-6639	Zoostorm	www.zoostorm.com	£957	Feb 08	★★★★★
A stripped-back, no-frills laptop, offering great processing power at the expense of additional features and screen quality						
<i>Pros:</i> Its hefty components made it the top performer in our After Effects, Photoshop and Cinebench tests						
<i>Cons:</i> The low-res screen makes many creative applications miserably slow and fiddly; no FireWire port or Bluetooth; bulky						
	8510w	HP Compaq	www.hp.com/uk	£1,326	Feb 08	★★★★★
A high-end, if uninspiringly-designed, model with an excellent, high-definition screen and workstation-class graphics chip						
<i>Pros:</i> The Fire GL V5600 graphics chip makes it excellent for 3D and motion graphics artists and video editors						
<i>Cons:</i> Other features rate as only average, considering the high price; it achieved a poor Photoshop score in our tests						
	F3Ke	Asus	www.uk.asus.com	£499	Feb 08	★★★★★
A budget-priced laptop whose performance is unlikely to meet the needs of creative professionals						
<i>Pros:</i> At less than half the price of most other laptops we tested, it's extremely affordable; includes AMD processor						
<i>Cons:</i> Poor performance in tests of Photoshop, After Effects and Cinebench; short battery life and cramped, low-res screen						
	Macbook Pro	Apple	www.apple.com/uk	£1,105	Feb 08	★★★★★
Another slick model from Apple, with nifty little additions thanks to the new Leopard operating system						
<i>Pros:</i> The ergonomics and overall design make this a highly desirable model; slender and light; includes gestural trackpad commands						
<i>Cons:</i> Considering its modest specifications it's on the pricey side; trounced by other models in our Photoshop and After Effects tests						
	Precision M4300	Dell	www.dell.com/uk	£1,102	Feb 08	★★★★★
With plenty of processing power and a high-end screen, Dell's model has plenty to offer to creatives						
<i>Pros:</i> Excellent specifications and stellar performance in most of our tests; great value for money						
<i>Cons:</i> At 3.1kg, it's pretty heavy; design is functional but dull; the 3D chip leaves much to be desired						
	X65	Samsung	www.samsung.co.uk	£999	Feb 08	★★★★★
An appealingly-designed laptop with plenty of processing power and an impressive screen						
<i>Pros:</i> Slimmer than the MacBook and light, too; good performance; excellent mix of price, performance and design for money						
<i>Cons:</i> Although very good, the screen is inferior to the MacBook's LED screen and the HD ones offered by some competitors						
	Xtreme 770	Rock	www.rock-direct.com	£1871.49	Jan 08	★★★★★
Impressive performance and graphics equipment are, unfortunately, housed in clunky casing						
<i>Pros:</i> Delivers excellent test results from its top-rated CPU and graphics chip; a real powerhouse of a laptop						
<i>Cons:</i> Huge and very heavy; let down by a mediocre screen and unappealing, poorly-designed casing						

Monitors

	526 LCD Monitor	LaCie	www.lacie.co.uk	£1,420	Aug 07	★★★★★
A 26-inch, 16:10 aspect ratio LCD display with a sharp picture. After calibration, the output is exceptional						
<i>Pros:</i> Highest-grade output of any monitor; capable of 95 per cent of Adobe RGB gamut; nifty built-in tools such as light sensor						
<i>Cons:</i> Far more expensive than competitors – only really worthwhile for high-end users; tied to a single spectrophotometer						
	30-inch Cinema Display	Apple	www.apple.co.uk	£1,020	Aug 07	★★★★★
Clean lines, slimline base and neat cabling make this offering one of the best looking on the market						
<i>Pros:</i> Best colour output of 30-inch displays; exceptionally good-looking design; has built-in FireWire and USB ports						
<i>Cons:</i> No Windows profiles; single input; expensive compared to HP LP3065; slimline base means screen can't be swivelled						
	CG241W	Eizo	www.eizo.co.uk	£1,149	Nov 07	★★★★★
An excellent all-round display for digital creatives						
<i>Pros:</i> Excellent picture quality; fast response rate for 3D animation; sturdy base that's easy to swivel						
<i>Cons:</i> Output not as good as LaCie's 526; hood fiddly to put together						
	Cintiq 12WX	Wacom	www.wacom.com	£706	Feb 08	★★★★★
An innovative graphics tablet, with a 12-inch screen offering easy on-screen drawing						
<i>Pros:</i> Superb sensitivity and pen control offer impressively realistic simulations of pen, brush and pencil strokes						
<i>Cons:</i> Ergonomics for on-lap sketching could be better; status and power LED lights are distracting						
	LP3065	HP	www.hp.com/uk	£849	Aug 07	★★★★★
A excellent option for those on a budget, this 30-inch LCD offers a decent picture at a bargain price						
<i>Pros:</i> Cheap-as-chips price; respectable image quality after calibration; three DVI inputs; easy to tilt and swivel screen						
<i>Cons:</i> Ugly design and cheap-feeling materials; poor image quality before calibration; not a match for other 30-inch LCDs available						
	MultiSync LCD2690WUXi	NEC	nec-display-systems.co.uk	£789	Aug 07	★★★★★
Similar in looks to the LaCie 526, NEC's 26-inch LCD offers good output at a very reasonable price						
<i>Pros:</i> Relatively low cost and excellent price-to-quality ratio; better output than 30-inch displays except for the LaCie 526						
<i>Cons:</i> No calibration software included; not as good for high-end design as Eizo and LaCie; only supports 12-bit colour processing						
	SyncMaster 305T	Samsung	www.samsung.co.uk	£1,149	Oct 07	★★★★★
This 30-inch LCD combines a bright, high-resolution screen with a response rate of 6ms – very nippy for a screen this size						
<i>Pros:</i> Fast response rate for a 30-inch LCD; bright output; compares favourably to Apple and Dell models						
<i>Cons:</i> More expensive than rival models; no media card or FireWire ports; high resolution puts extra strain on graphics card						



3D and animation

	3DS Max 2008	Autodesk	www.autodesk.com	£2,695	Dec 07	★★★★★
Tenth full release of Autodesk suite gives improved DWG support and integrated FBX translator <i>Pros:</i> Interactive viewports; DirectX 10 support; character animation and modelling enhancements <i>Cons:</i> Windows (64-bit/32-bit) XP and Vista only; some 'new' features carried over from 3DS Max 9 Extension 1						
	Maya 2008	Autodesk	www.autodesk.co.uk	£1,449	Nov 07	★★★★★
Not as groundbreaking as version 8.5, but has a lot to offer VFX professionals and character animators <i>Pros:</i> New polygon modelling tools; character animation and skinning enhancement; new nCloth capabilities; some handy new tools <i>Cons:</i> Fairly steep learning curve, and no printed manual to help; relatively expensive; high system requirements						
	Modo 301	Luxology	www.luxology.com	\$895	Jan 08	★★★★★
Versatile 3D modelling, animation and rendering software for linear modelling workflows or as part of multi-software job <i>Pros:</i> Mesh and image-based sculpting workflow; layer support; animation; variety of learning aids; snapping and precision tools <i>Cons:</i> Power hungry when used for more complex modelling tasks; animation functionality is fairly limited						
	Piranesi 5	Informatix	www.informatix.co.uk	£395	D&AD 07	★★★★★
Piranesi provides a quick way to paint on surfaces in 3D, while adhering to perspective <i>Pros:</i> Quick plane and material-based painting and texturing tools; multiple fill and cut-out tools <i>Cons:</i> Specialized application with a cluttered interface; unusual tool conventions are hard to get used to						
	SoftimageXSI 6.5	Softimage	www.softimage.com	£1,449	Dec 07	★★★★★
A restructured update brings tools previously only offered with the Advanced package to XSI Essentials <i>Pros:</i> Hair, Fur and Syflex Cloth in Essentials; Direct X 10 support; improvements in audio, modelling, instancing and vertex colour <i>Cons:</i> Steep learning curve; price increase for Essentials; no Foundation version						
	V3 Pro Pack	Antics	www.antics3d.com	£295	Feb 08	★★★★★
A versatile new release of the scene-planning tool, with libraries of props and actions relating to them <i>Pros:</i> Improved camera management; an attractive package represents great value and ongoing incentives <i>Cons:</i> Windows only; no Flash export; no printable/PDF shot list; facial animation is limited to eye movement						
	ZBrush 3.1	Pixologic	www.pixologic.com	£290	Jan 08	★★★★★
This update's new features include multi-processor optimization and the ability to apply real-world texturing from images <i>Pros:</i> Transpose and real-time posing; mesh extraction, subtools; HD geometry; local subdivision and layers; new brushes <i>Cons:</i> No equivalent Mac version; precipitous learning curve; lacks animation capability; idiosyncratic workflow and tool techniques						



Video effects plug-ins

	Continuum Complete 5	Boris FX	www.borisfx.com	\$895	Oct 07	★★★★★
Library of filters and presets for four of the leading video/motion graphics technologies on the market <i>Pros:</i> Comprehensive offering of effects in unified and integrated format; OpenGL and multi-processor aware functionality <i>Cons:</i> Rather expensive unless majority of effects are required						
	Halide	Amber Visual	www.ambervisual.com	£499	Jun 07	★★★★★
The first release from plug-in newcomer Amber Visual, Halide is a film-look tool for After Effects that's worth a look <i>Pros:</i> Offers fast operation and flexible adjustment tools; presets are well arranged and effective <i>Cons:</i> No support for editing software or Mac OS X; no grain tools, and the interface can cramp After Effects' layout						
	Knoll Light Factory 2.5	Red Giant	www.redgiantsoftware.com	\$199	Feb 07	★★★★★
A lens-flare plug-in for Final Cut Pro, Premiere Pro, and Xpress Pro. A comprehensive set of controls for lens flare effects <i>Pros:</i> Knoll Light Factory is the best solution for lens flare effects; taps the power of your graphics card to produce excellent results <i>Cons:</i> Interface feels dated and jars when used with Final Cut Pro; can be difficult to use, and too easy to create over-used cheesy effects						
	Magic Bullet Colorista	Red Giant	www.redgiantsoftware.com	\$199	Apr 07	★★★★★
Colour-correction and colour-matching plug-in for Final Cut Pro, After Effects, Premiere Pro, and Avid systems <i>Pros:</i> Fast and high-grade colour tools; swift masking controls; high-quality output <i>Cons:</i> Final Cut Pro's colour-correction tools are already pretty good, so might have limited use on that system						
	Nucleo Pro 2.0	Gridiron	www.gridironsoftware.com	\$395	Oct 07	★★★★★
Big-brother of Nucleo, the must-have plug-in for After Effects 7.0. Pro version adds very useful functions <i>Pros:</i> Boosts your workflow and productivity in AE; new version makes proxies easy; renders 3D <i>Cons:</i> Rendered 3D scenes aren't imported automatically into AE						
	Sapphire 2 for AE	GenArts	www.genarts.com	\$599	Dec 07	★★★★★
More than 30 new filters available in the second release of the collection for After Effects and compatible hosts <i>Pros:</i> Highest-quality effects. Excellent level of control and on-screen tools. Many useful additions. Fast rendering <i>Cons:</i> Pricey, with no new must-have tools; not all the new filters are particularly successful, and many are variations of one another						
	ToonIt	Digital Anarchy	www.digitalanarchy.com	\$295	Nov 07	★★★★★
ToonIt isn't perfect when it comes to turning real-world footage into cartoon, but it's the best we've seen so far <i>Pros:</i> Best filter so far for mimicking the look of rotoscoping; high level of control, especially over blurs and quality level <i>Cons:</i> Slow rendering and previewing at high quality; the filters other than rotoscoping are functional but hardly ground-breaking						


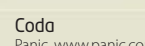


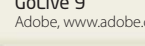
Landscape software

	Vue 6 Infinite	www.e-onsoftware.com	£406	Jul 07	★★★★★
Version 6 is a great leap forward from previous versions, offering high-quality scene production and animation tools. <i>Pros:</i> EcoSystem Gen II technology for painting instances directly onto objects. Spectral Engine and MetacLOUDs. Layered EcoSystems. Terrain Editor with Solid 3D. <i>Cons:</i> Expensive compared to closest competition; manual is fairly basic.					
	Bryce 6.1	daz3d.com	Jul 07	\$109.95	★★★★★
Affordable landscape generator with support for 16-bit heightmaps					
	MojoWorld Pro 3.1	pandromeda.com	Jul 07	\$479	★★★★★
Powerful fractal-based planet generator with a refined and understated interface					
	Terragen 2	planetside.co.uk	Jul 07	from \$199	★★★★★
Produces stunning photorealistic renders of generated terrains and atmospheres					
	Worldbuilder Pro	digi-element.com	Jul 07	\$699	★★★★★
An innovative and powerful landscape generator with an interesting interface					


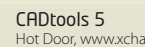

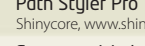
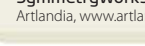
Video software

	After Effects CS3	adobe.co.uk	Aug 07	£915	★★★★★
With its huge arsenal of tools, AE is still the best overall motion-graphics and visual-effects suite for your money					
	Boris Blue 2.0	borisfx.com	Nov 07	£485	★★★★★
Fleshed-out toolset with more effects but very specific hardware requirements					
	Combustion 2008	autodesk.co.uk	Feb 08	£850	★★★★★
A good compositing tool, but with few features to encourage upgrading					
	Mocha-AE	imagineer-systems.com	Dec 07	\$299	★★★★★
High-end motion-tracking tools at a fraction of the full-version price					
	SpeedEdit 1.2	newtek-europe.com	Aug 07	\$495	★★★★★
Versatile video editor that lets you import and work with multiple formats					
	Vegas Pro 8	sonycreativesoftware.com	Dec 07	£380	★★★★★
Powerful vector-based titling and greatly improved audio tools					
	Vision 1.0	eyeonline.com	Sep 07	\$1,495	★★★★★
Excellent motion-graphic tool for a niche audience but not an full alternative to AE					


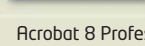


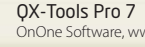

Web

	Fireworks CS3 ★★★★★ £255 adobe.co.uk Jul 07 New workflow features make this a near-essential purchase for Web designers design Digital Arts Best Buy
	Coda D&AD 07 ★★★★★ Panic, www.panic.com \$99
	Dreamweaver CS3 Jul 07 ★★★★★ Adobe, www.adobe.co.uk £335
	Expression Web Mar 07 ★★★★★ Microsoft, www.microsoft.co.uk £221
	GoLive 9 Sep 07 ★★★★★ Adobe, www.adobe.co.uk £335

Illustrator plug-ins

	Phantasm CS 2 ★★★★★ £19 phantasmcs.com Aug 07 Cheap plug-in offering a wide range of useful add-ons for colour correction design Digital Arts Best Buy
	CADtools 5 Aug 07 ★★★★★ Hot Door, www.xchangeuk.com £159
	FilterIt 4.1 Aug 07 ★★★★★ CValley, www.xchangeuk.com £99
	Path Styler Pro 1.1.1 Aug 07 ★★★★★ Shinycore, www.shinycore.com £59
	SymmetryWorks 4.1.3 Aug 07 ★★★★★ Artlandia, www.artlandia.com \$255








DTP

	InDesign CS3 ★★★★★ £609 Adobe www.adobe.com New workflow tools impress in the CS3 Suite Digital Arts Best Buy
	Acrobat 8 Professional Jan 07 ★★★★★ Adobe, www.adobe.co.uk £395
	PrintDevizor 2 Jul 06 ★★★★★ StoneCube, stonecube.co.uk £195
	QuarkXPress 7 Jul 06 ★★★★★ Quark, www.quark.co.uk £749
	QX-Tools Pro 7 Mar 07 ★★★★★ OnOne Software, www.ononesoftware.com \$99.95
	Quark Print Collection Feb 07 ★★★★★ Quark, www.quark.co.uk £199

Utilities

	Portfolio 8.5 ★★★★★ extensis.com Nov 07 £129 Few new tools for newcomers but plenty to endear it to existing users and UI glitches have been ironed out
	Youmehub ★★★★★ youmehub.com Sep 07 £55 Studio management tool that provides an all-in-one solution to solving business chaos

Interactive

	EasyPano Studio 2005 EasyPano www.easypano.com £735 Dec 06 ★★★★★ A comprehensive tool incorporating PanoWeaver 4 and TourWeaver <i>Pros:</i> Fisheye-stitching offers great functionality; decent price for output; handles two- to six-shot originals <i>Cons:</i> Expensive considering it can't stitch conventional lenses, only fisheye ones Digital Arts Best Buy
	Expression Blend Microsoft www.microsoft.com £345 Jan 08 ★★★★★ Well-structured interface design software for applications based on the Windows Presentation Foundation <i>Pros:</i> Design-led workflow for building WPF workflows; well-structured tools and interface; has a library of pre-built event triggers <i>Cons:</i> Restricted to WPF development environment; can use XML and CLR Objects only as data sources; has no Mac OS support
	Flash CS3 Professional Adobe www.adobe.co.uk £489 D&AD 07 ★★★★★ The first release of Flash since Adobe acquired it along with Macromedia; ActionScript 3 capability is a genuine leap forward <i>Pros:</i> New productivity features and the promise of vastly improved performance for high-end developers <i>Cons:</i> Quite pricey for what otherwise feels like a 0.5 release; efficiency improvements rather than major new tools
	ImageAssembler Pro PanVue www.panvue.com \$129 Dec 06 ★★★★★ This low-cost stitching panorama application doesn't include virtual-tour tools, but it does offer an array of stitching tools <i>Pros:</i> Good application for newcomers to panoramic stitching; supports multi-layer PSD output and 16-bit colour with ICC profiles <i>Cons:</i> Doesn't work with fisheye lenses; lacks advanced correction tools; no tour facility; a bit low-end for serious users
	Quark Interactive Designer Quark www.euro.quark.com £69 Jan 07 ★★★★★ QuarkXPress plug-in that offers easy-to-use Flash authoring integrated in the DTP workflow, and aimed at graphic designers <i>Pros:</i> Easy-to-use environment; users can create cross-media print, Web and Flash projects with shared resources <i>Cons:</i> Cannot import or modify existing projects or SWF files from other applications; URL linking proved temperamental
	Soundbooth CS3 Adobe www.adobe.co.uk £139 Sep 07 ★★★★★ Good value audio-editing tool for those working primarily with video; integrates well with other Adobe CS3 products <i>Pros:</i> AutoComposer feature lets you assign and customize scores to suit length and mood of video sequence; good task-based workflow <i>Cons:</i> With no specialist audio tools, Soundbooth's use is limited to video and multimedia; supports Intel Macs and Windows only
	Virtual Tour Studio RealViz www.realviz.com €790 Dec 06 ★★★★★ Bundles RealViz's Stitcher 5.5 Unlimited and VTour for a complete panorama and virtual-tour creation workflow <i>Pros:</i> Excellent value for money with a comprehensive toolset and great output; correction tools are of particular note <i>Cons:</i> Fisheye stitching can be temperamental, while VTour is fiddly to use in some areas; workflow is unusual Digital Arts Best Buy

Design and imaging

	Dfine 2.0 Nik Software www.niksoftware.com \$99.95 Oct 07 ★★★★★ Photoshop plug-in that offers fast, automatic reduction of noise, now improved with horizontal and vertical split views <i>Pros:</i> Very effective at noise reduction; includes both automatic and manual tools <i>Cons:</i> Niche tool; zoom lacks options Digital Arts Best Buy
	Exposure 2 Alien Skin www.alienskin.com \$249 Dec 07 ★★★★★ The best Photoshop plug-in to transform digital photos into ones that look as if they were captured on film <i>Pros:</i> Astounding output; excellent controls; wealth of film stocks mimicked; over 300 presets for special effects <i>Cons:</i> Needs Photoshop CS2 or higher Digital Arts Best Buy
	Fluid Mask 3.0 Vertus www.vertustech.co.uk £159 Oct 07 ★★★★★ As adept at cut-outs of simple objects as it is with hair and similarly coloured foreground and background <i>Pros:</i> Fastest, most accurate cut-out tool available; new Color Workspace and Patches improve fine tuning work <i>Cons:</i> No path creation; standalone version can output only PNGs; can't run as a Smart Filter Digital Arts Best Buy
	PhotoTune 2.2 OnOne ononesoftware.com \$159 Jan 08 ★★★★★ Photoshop plug-in offering colour correction tools targeted at creatives working with large numbers of images <i>Pros:</i> Speedy tools, can correct colour based on skin tones as well as on comparative assessment; now works with 16-bit images <i>Cons:</i> Not much on offer for creative pros; of limited interest to experienced Photoshop colour retouchers
	Expression Design Microsoft www.microsoft.com £399 Jan 08 ★★★★★ Vector graphics tool for producing content for Microsoft's Web tools, Expression Blend and Silverlight <i>Pros:</i> XAML Copy and Paste, Live Effects, Text, bitmap import and autotrace options; integration with Expression Blend <i>Cons:</i> Limited .PSD and .ai file support; no Mac version; lacks support for CMYK colour separations; disjointed workflow
	Primatte Chromakey Digital Anarchy www.digitalanarchy.com \$269 Sep 07 ★★★★★ Photoshop masking plug-in that uses colour rather than paths to extract people and objects <i>Pros:</i> Fast and efficient workflow; works as a Smart Filter and its Light Wrap function creates realistic comps <i>Cons:</i> Other tools better for tricky cutouts; requires green/bluescreen shots Digital Arts Best Buy
	SymmetryShop 2 Artlandia www.artlandia.com \$299 Jan 08 ★★★★★ Flexible pattern-creation plug-in for Photoshop that is ideal for creatives working in the fashion or textiles sectors <i>Pros:</i> Flexible tools; Smart Object Support boosts multi-layer options; support for editable text and vector layers <i>Cons:</i> Pricey; steep learning curve; tricky user interface; fiddly installation; some stability issues

DOSCH DESIGN



**Dosch HDRI:
Surroundings**



**Dosch HDRI:
Skies V2**



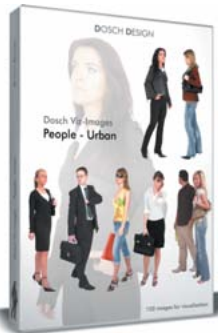
**Dosch HDRI: Chrome
& Studio Effects V2**



**Dosch Textures:
Construction Materials V2**



**Dosch 3D:
Cars 2007**



**Dosch Viz-Images:
People - Urban**



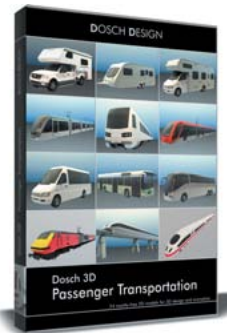
**Dosch 3D:
Building Details**



**Dosch Textures:
Outdoor**



**Dosch 3D:
Food & Groceries**



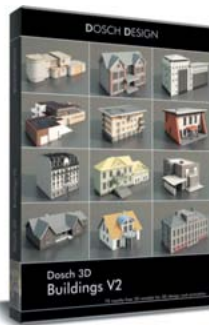
**Dosch 3D: Passenger
Transportation**



**Dosch 3D:
Modern Furniture**



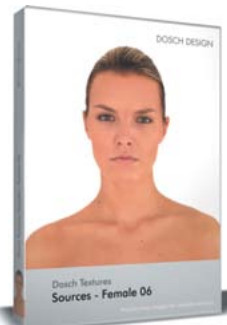
**Dosch 3D:
Natural Objects V2**



**Dosch 3D:
Buildings V2**



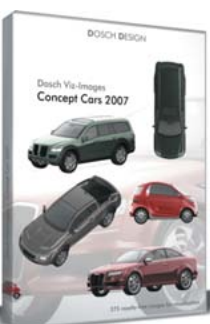
**Dosch Textures:
Sources - Female 01**



**Dosch Textures:
Sources - Female 06**



**Dosch HDRI:
Interior**



**Dosch Viz-Images:
Concept Cars 2007**



**Dosch 3D:
Lo-Poly People**



**Dosch 3D:
Trees & Conifers V3**



**Dosch 3D:
Clothing**

Completely textured 3D-models and scenes of the **>Dosch 3D** productline are supplemented by the seamlessly tileable surface materials of **>Dosch Textures**.

High Dynamic Range Images **>Dosch HDRI** allow you to incorporate the complex lighting of a real scene in your 3D-scenes. Perfect shadow casting and reflections will create a new dimension of realism in your renderings.

The 2-D objects of **>Dosch Viz-Images** support you by creating professional architectural visualizations.

The royalty-free images of **>Dosch Layer FX** unlock a new realm of creative freedom - and therefore substantial time and cost savings. Illustrations, cover pictures, advertising, annual reports, event artwork: the **DOSCH DESIGN** products offer a comprehensive collection of design templates.

this month's cd

JOIN THE DIGITAL ARTS CREATIVE COMMUNITY AT WWW.DIGITALARTSONLINE.CO.UK



THE LATEST CREATIVE RESOURCES,
TRAINING AND SOFTWARE

WORK ALONG WITH THE EXPERTS

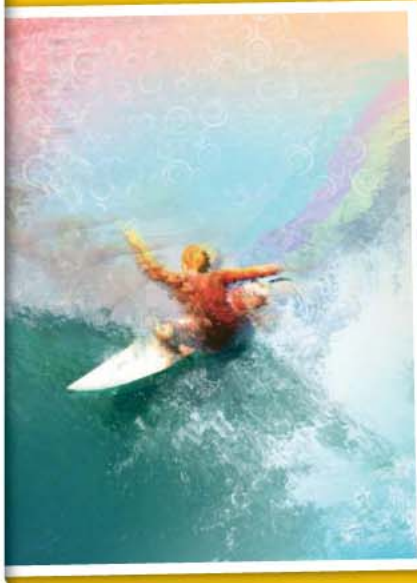
Sample files for tutorials

Follow along with our Masterclasses using
the files found on this month's disc.

Kicking off on page 44, Rob Carissimo
shows you how to add a psychedelic
sheen to your artwork. On the CD are
project files with shapes and grunges
used to create the 60s-style effect – plus
a link to where you can obtain the
central surfer image.

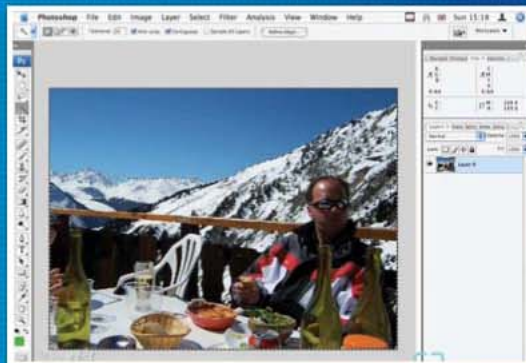
On page 48, illustrator Alexis West
teaches you how to create a compelling
character design, the original sketch of
which can be found on the disc.

Visual-effects artist Angie Taylor
details advanced tracking and cloning
techniques on page 52. On the CD is the
original footage from *Hibernation* to
work along with, plus the After Effects
projects file.



THREE FULL TRAINING VIDEOS FROM TALENTED PIXIE

Photoshop video tutorials



Taken from the new series
of Live and Learn tutorials
produced by Talented Pixie,
this month's CD include three modules
from the company's brand new DVD,
Photoshop CS3 – Level 3.

This advanced set of training
videos is designed for experienced

Photoshop users who need to take
their skills to a higher level.

The first module – *Alpha channels
into InDesign* – shows you how to take
images featuring transparency with
soft vignetting edges into InDesign,
as well as being able to control text
run-arounds with ease.

Advanced shortcuts runs through of
useful keyboard shortcuts, layer tricks,
brushing options and other tips – plus
some hidden features.

Making masks easy will deepen
your understanding on masks, how
they work and how to use them.
www.talentedpixie.co.uk

OVER AN HOUR OF THE BEST ANIMATED FILMS SHOWN AT THE FESTIVAL

Flip Animation Festival



The Flip Animation Festival
brings the best animators
from around the world
to the West Midlands every year,
showcasing their talents at the
Lighthouse centre in Wolverhampton.

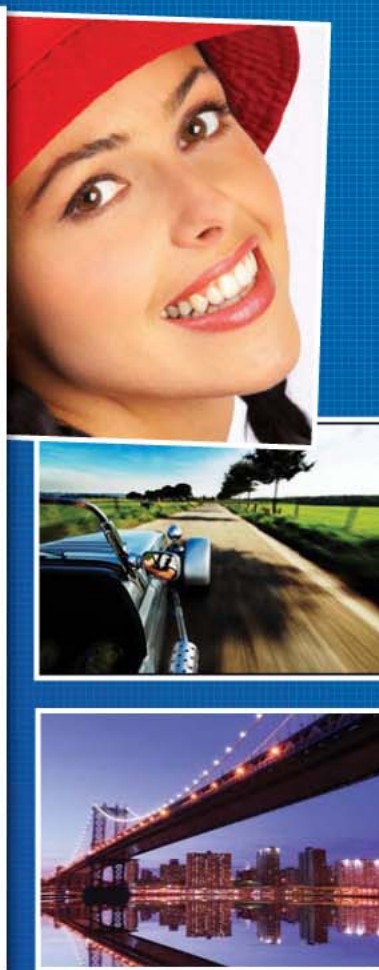
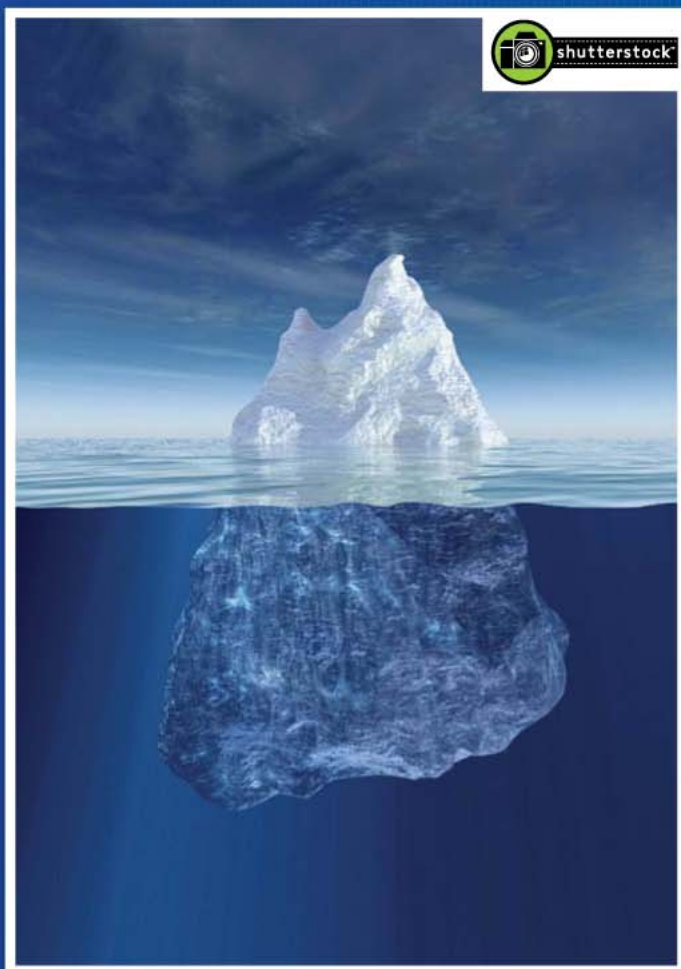
The organizers and animators have
kindly provided us with 15 of the top
animated short films from the festival,
providing a snapshot of the styles,
techniques and talents that will be
making it big in 2008 – and a very

entertaining hour's worth of films.

Our showcase includes short films,
art and motion graphics projects, with
styles ranging from stop motion to
hand-drawn animation to CG.
www.flipfestival.co.uk

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Hi-res stock photos



This month, *Digital Arts* has teamed up with Shutterstock to offer you a full library of high-resolution stock images. The images are large enough to be used at A4 at 300dpi – enabling you to use them across a whole page, or crop into fine details without losing quality. These images are royalty-free and can be used in your commercial work.

Shutterstock is a subscription-based resource for over 2.5 million premium, royalty-free stock images, including photography, vectors, and illustrations.

www.shutterstock.com

Behind the Tales...

Prime Focus London has provided us with a behind-the-scenes look at its visual-effects work on the forthcoming movie *Tales of the Riverbank*, an updated version of the classic kids' TV show.

The video breaks down a number of the film's key VFX shots to show how they were completed, mixing miniature sets, puppets and CG animation for a seamless result. The shots include a look inside the WMD factory with CG bubbling marmalade, and an assault on the factory by the heroes in a plane and a jeep.

www.primefocuslondon.com



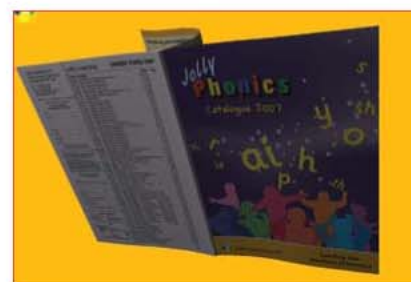
REALVUE3D

As reviewed on page 56, RealVue3D is 3D visual-simulation software for print media. It provides an innovative way to design, present and approve jobs or ad placements via a 3D document viewer.

The output of the system is a platform-independent Java file that allows any computer user to display the print document, turn the pages, rotate the viewing angle and zoom into detail. The system enables viewing conditions and print characteristics to be varied, such as stock weight, finish and texture.

The software offers a host of advanced features such as mimicking the looks of local and global varnish, binding, paper thickness, template and branding options.

www.ffei.co.uk



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Please note that personal correspondence cannot be entered into.

Sales are the best way to stop stealing

Mission Impossible-style metadata tracking and paid-for copyright control services may be one way to protect your artwork from theft (*Digital Arts*, February). Another way is to make it easy for people to purchase your work in a form – and at a cost – that's appropriate for your audience.

What I'm suggesting is the iTunes model, which to my mind has proved more useful in stopping Internet piracy than the hundreds of lawsuits thrown out by the RIAA and its ilk.

As well as letting large publishers negotiate to use your art in prestigious titles, and rich patrons pay through the nose for well-framed A0 prints, you should also let allow lower-resolution versions to be sold at a marginal cost on your Web site – and sell your work as desktop backdrops for a pittance.

James Davies

Don't end up alone

There's one important part of going freelance that wasn't discussed in your feature (*Digital Arts*, February). It's not a business or creative consideration, but a holistic one, and applies to most designers who work from home (rather than 'temping' in other studios). It's that you're going to be spending a lot of time on your own.

Moving from the conversational buzz of your average studio to an environment where you're alone most of the time can be unnerving experience for many designers. It's not just a question of chatting about last night's TV – though many freelancers do miss this – but it's also about being able to discuss your work with fellow creatives and get their feedback.

I'm not saying the freelancing turns you into a hermit – you still spend much of your day talking to clients, and IMing and Facebooking your mates – but it's a lot less than most in-studio workers are used to. And it's something anyone thinking of going freelance needs to be aware of – and prepared for.

Rob Lee



DigitalArts Star letter



Hidden depths



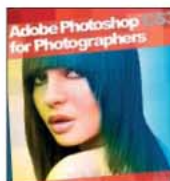
Amit Gupta's short article on the design blog A Brief Message (www.abriefmessage.com) has started a discussion at our studio – and across the blogosphere – and I wondered what your thoughts on it were. In it, he states that: "Your most intuitive, meaningful, and devastatingly clever design is worthless – unless it's shallow enough to appeal in the first five seconds."

Reactions to this ranged from the superior ("my work's better than that") and snide ("maybe *his* designs"), to the accepting ("yeah, course") and nonchalant ("thought everyone knew that"). I can see both points of view, which are valid and – more importantly – true.

Designs should appeal instantly, whether they be billboard ads that can be appreciated in time taken to drive past, to Web sites with navigation that's clear even if you've bypassed the front page via a blog or Google link.

But designs should have depth too. Web site layout should think of returning visitors as well as new ones. Billboard ads should include details that keep them fresh after you've driven past them every day. Packaging should offer hidden extras like Innocent's jokes under the folds of its cartons. The best designs are instantly accessible but reward time spent in their company.

Meredith Franklin



WRITE IN AND WIN!

This month, the star letter wins a copy of *Adobe Photoshop CS3 for Photographers* by acclaimed photo guru Martin Evening.

Covering practical techniques and real-life assignments, the includes tutorials and before-&-after illustrations to teach you the new tools.

Readers can purchase this 682-page book from Focal Press at focalpress.com for £29.99.

BLOG

HOW THE MACBOOK AIR MADE ME TIDY UP MY LIFE
The first thing I did upon getting my hands on a MacBook Air was sigh heavily and curse my luck. Not that I'm not lucky to get my hands on one – I'm excited about that.

No, my sigh was one of realization. Realization that my current MacBook was stocked with a 160GB hard drive, a drive that was nearly full.

In order to fit my life into the 80GB MacBook Air, I was going to have to remove half the data from my hard drive.

Photos, movies and music went first. My iTunes music now resides on an external hard drive. All the videos on my drive met one of two fates: if they were useless, they visited the Trash. If they were still vaguely useful, they migrated to the lifeboat. My iPhoto library went the same way.

I have come far in my austerity plan – but I've still used 74.29GB of data. There's not much room left for new files.

After a few weeks using the MacBook Air, I might achieve such a zen-like state that I can squeeze my life into its drive with room to spare. But if I had to find more to delete off my drive now, I suspect my sanity wouldn't survive the attempt.
Jason Snell

Read more and respond at the Digital Arts Web site.

Get back in touch with your designs

I was glad to see that Wacom has released an affordable version of its Cintiq graphics tablet (Reviews, *Digital Arts* February), as it means that I can finally get to touch what I'm working with. Too many of us have gotten used to working with normal Wacom tablets and mice, and forgotten what it's like to have the perfect co-ordination of eye, hand, tool and media that we took for granted in the days of pen-&-paper or paint-&-canvas.

The Cintiq's combination of screen and tablet should reacquaint me with these skills, helping me create better work.

David Wood

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