

22
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EXPERT TUTORIALS

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ECOMMERCE EXPOSED

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THINK SIMPLE NAVIGATION

HOW TO

Build a dynamic retro interface in **Flash CS3**

Get to grips with the hot new styling tags of **CSS3**

Design effective mobile website solutions with online editor **Wapple**

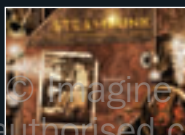
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The golden rules of website design explained



SEXY-LOOKING LYNX

We go exclusively Behind the Scenes with the Amnesia team on building this super-hot site

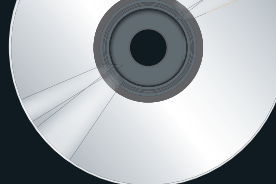


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Welcome



One of the more vital aspects to online design is being eroded. Can the lost art of web navigation be rediscovered or are we destined to roam aimlessly?

OKAY, SO THAT might be a bit strong, but perhaps we need to start thinking in extremes to really look at things objectively. The web as we know it is changing rapidly, this we know, but what isn't so certain is whether the designers who drive that change are willing to or even able to adapt with it. This month, we pick up the navigation baton in an attempt to identify the science behind one of the fundamental cornerstones of website craft. As we move away from the traditional page structures in favour of richer applications and experiences, then we have to acknowledge that the way sites are used and interpreted by visitors will change also. Making our content effective to navigate was by no means a mastered art before, so there's never been a better time to look carefully at what we should be doing and why. So our lead feature this issue takes a distinctly academic tack, with guest writer and renowned internet psychologist Graham Jones holding court on the subject. There's opinions from Jakob Nielsen and others to chew over, so be sure to settle down and savour the proceedings – from page 24 if you have trouble navigating to it!

In addition, this issue we take a brief look at the specifications and concerns over the newest batch of browsers. How good are

they really and what are the key technical areas that developers will need to know in order to make them perform better? Along similar lines, we send Steve Jenkins out on a mission to uncover the brand-new tags associated with CSS3 and establish who's currently supporting them and who's not. Other tutorial highlights include fashionable guides to building retro flash GUIs and crafting steampunk page templates, while our eCommerce section swells to include affiliate widgets and a project case study.

So much stuff, so little time before we do the whole thing again...

Mark Billen
Editor

Editor's picks

Web Designer 148 has a not-so-secret bevy of great content that also includes...



34-36

The makers of the Lynx Effect site give us a cheeky look at how it was built in Behind the Scenes



70-73

Learn the essential steps in crafting mobile websites from the expert team at Wapple



88-91

How affiliate widgets can enrich your latest eCommerce solutions and help you grow in no time



Julian Velard

DESIGNED BY: **WeFail**

URL: www.julianvelard.com

This is without doubt one of the best site experiences we've had in a long time, and therefore it had to be crowned 'Site of the month' by default. Julian Velard is a New York-based musician who is being championed here by those mad maverick Mancunians WeFail across an eclectic Flash website of epic proportions. What you get is a dreamlike RPG set to Velard's catchy pop tunes and rendered in WeFail's trademark cut-out, shambolic animations that reference Bob Dylan, *Rear Window* and *Scarface*, to name but a few. It's more like a collaboration, though, rather than a homage to the artist, with the site designers making sure their handiwork and accreditation can't help but be noticed – there's some mutual backslapping going on here and why not? We're not ones to spoil it for you, but the highlights include the David Bowie *Labyrinth* sequences and the ability to explore the whole thing with DVD-style commentary. Oh yes, we are *that* sad!

01

The homepage is a blatant send-up of Bob Dylan's iconic video for *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. More iconic references are scattered throughout the site

02

WeFail has done a top job of presenting artist information, or rather misinformation, in some inventive ways

03

Pop culture references extend to the infamous Sex Pistols interview on Granada TV. Bill Grundy sure remembers it...

04

Where else would you have to solve a puzzle by piecing together song lyrics from a pair of tattooed hands? Actually, you're probably better off not answering that

05

Justin even makes an appearance as a hilarious homage to David Bowie's performance as the Goblin King in *Labyrinth*

GOT IT? FLAUNT IT!

If you know of an exciting website or have perhaps built one you regard as being mighty fine, then tell us about it. We're always interested to hear about great URLs or stunning site launches so don't be shy, drop us a line at webdesigner@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Site Highlight



Apart from the hideously hilarious Bowie rip-offs, we love the Velard 2.0 section with funny send-ups of cookie scanning and Easter eggs. It's all simple Flash work, but the comedic and deliberately rough execution is so charming and infectious.



02



04



05

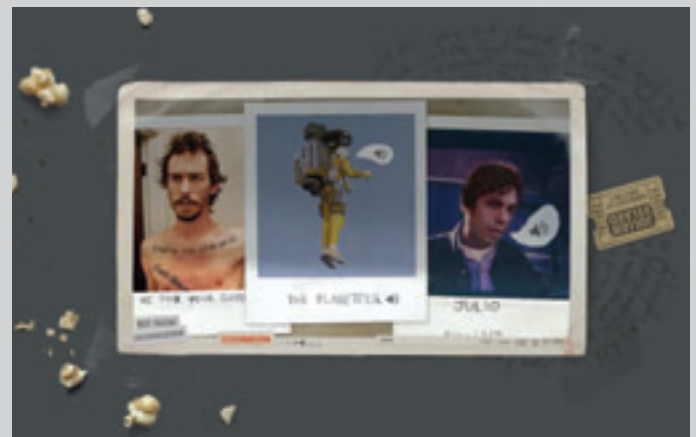


06



03

"Julian Velard is a New York-based musician who is being championed here by those mad maverick Mancunians WeFail"



07

06

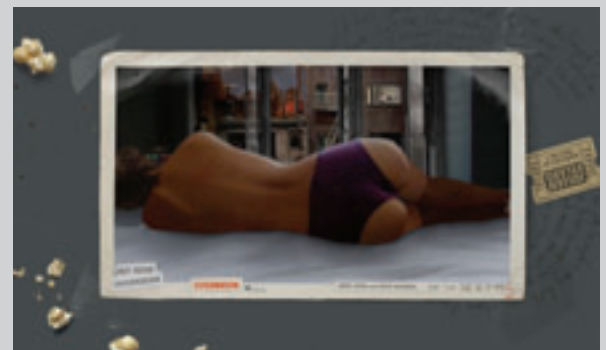
On most sites for music artists you'll find some video promos, but this one dishes up a grungy collection of obscure clips as you flick through the various channels

07

The homepage lets you cycle through three of Velard's songs (*Joni*, *Jimmy Dean And Steve McQueen* and *Love Again For The First Time*), but search within the site and you can uncover more, such as the ones displayed here

08

There are film references aplenty on this site, as clicking the Exploration link takes you to a page that makes a distinctive nod to *Rear Window*.



08



01

Max's Kansas City

DESIGNED BY: **thehappycorp global**

URL: www.maxskansascity.com

Aficionados of rock and roll will know that Max's, like other New York haunt CBGBs, was hugely influential in shaping the musical landscape of the Sixties and Seventies. Bands and artists such as The Velvet Underground, David Bowie, New York Dolls, Iggy Pop and Aerosmith graced the stage, while hip celebrities like Andy Warhol and poet Allen Ginsberg were regular visitors. This new Flash site does its best to resurrect the brand and the spirit of the venue by using pop merchandise and ephemera to chart the rise of some of the aforementioned acts. A pig to load it may well be, but the use of genuine band posters to load media maps of concert footage, biographies, photographs and interviews is a cool concept that's worth viewing alone.



02

"The use of genuine band posters to load media maps is a cool concept that's worth viewing alone"

01

The launch page is predominantly black and white with splashes of yellow and red, invoking the Pop Art sensibilities of the era

02

Hover the cursor over one of the posters and its corner will fold over, inviting you to zoom into it with a magnifying-glass symbol. Click through to enter or click the cross in the top right-hand corner to exit back out

03

When you click through to find more information, you are taken to a full-page montage of brightly coloured photographs, images and text

04

Click through the Enter Site link from the launch page and the graphic is lifted to reveal the main site's homepage, which is a nifty technique as it avoids loading yet another page and retains the user's interest

05

When in a poster's domain, click Next and it will zoom to another part of the page for the next block of information.

06

If you hover over a particular poster, a paragraph will pop up that informs the user what they will find when they click through

Site Highlight



Navigation takes the form of scanning across vast poster-based pages that contain great content for fans of the bands. Nice, but you wonder if a virtual version of Max's might have been a more fitting testament to this mecca of popular culture.



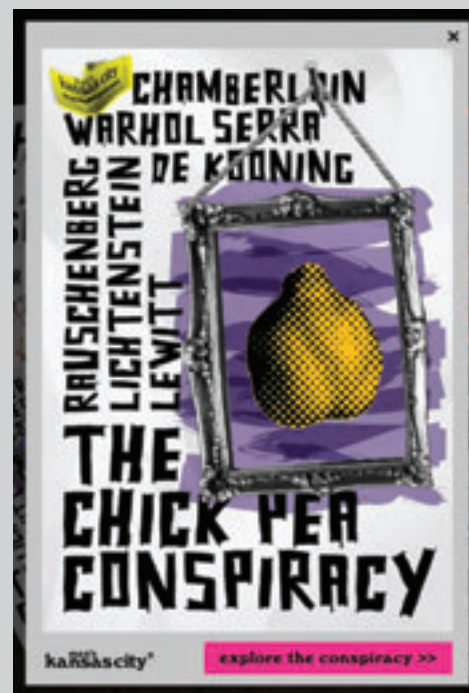
03



04



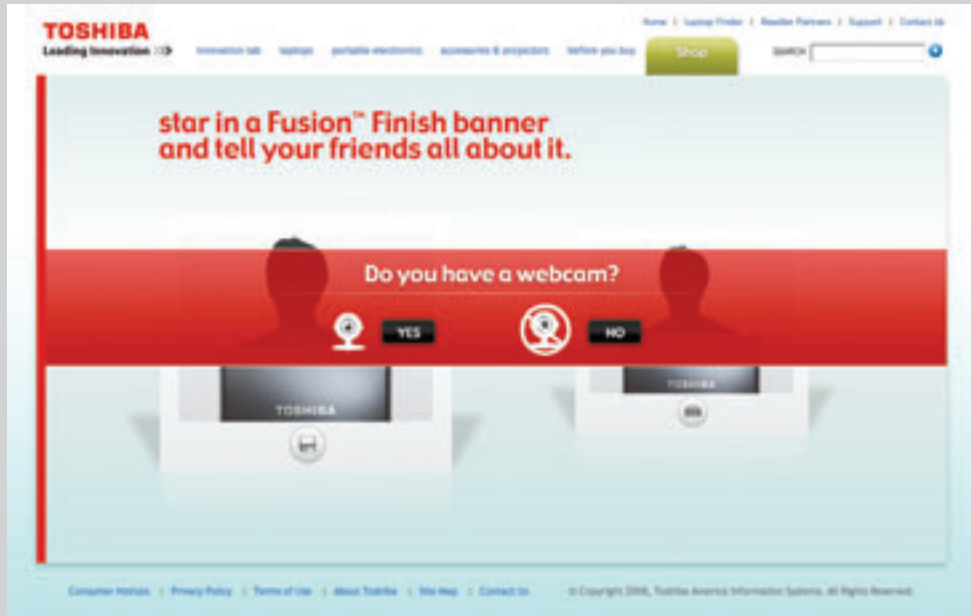
05



06



The highlight has to be the make-your-own-banner-ad facility – the only thing of note on show apart from the laptop. A great and ingenious idea that plays beautifully off the rather idiotic notion that we all want to be famous for merely existing!



01



02

“Toshiba has preyed on exhibitionism to promote its new laptop range”



03



04



05

FusionFinish Toshiba Laptop – Try it on!

DESIGNED BY: **Y&R Advertising Irvine**

URL: <http://explore.toshiba.com/fusionfinish>

Okay, so this site is here on an unashamed gimmick – but a good one at least. In an age where even the most unassuming members of the public want to snatch moments of fame, Toshiba has opportunistically preyed on such exhibitionism to promote its new laptop range. This site would normally be a fairly uninspiring product showcase, but the facility to shoot your own banner ad alongside the sleek Fusion machine via a webcam then mail your embarrassed friends as to its whereabouts is pretty cool. It represents a unique handling of this very fashionable camera interfacing with Flash 9, certainly something we’ve not seen elsewhere, but we reckon the space for your face is a bit compromising – especially for bigheads like our editor!

01

There is no messing about when you enter the web address and arrive at the homepage – automatically, it asks you whether you have a webcam or not

02

Take as long as you want getting the snapshot you want just right. The fixed graphic of the back of a Toshiba monitor gets in your way a bit, though!

03

A pop-up box will appear, courtesy of Adobe Flash Player, prompting as to whether it is allowed access to your webcam and microphone

04

The product information seems to be geared towards people who are concerned with how they are portrayed – ideal for those exhibitionists who are targeted with this concept of appearing on a banner advert

05

If you are not fortunate yet to have a webcam installed, then there is no degree of sympathy. As the site declares, it’s a real “Bummer” to say the least

Site Highlight



The game that is included on this site for the Toyota Matrix is a nice distraction that helps to keep the site visitors interested, and was also used on a recent dynamic Flash banner ad for publicising the car's launch campaign – check it out!

“This site is certainly a triumph in squeezing as much excitement out of an uninspiring Toyota”



01



02



04



03



05

Toyota Matrix 09

DESIGNED BY: **Saatchi Toronto**

URL: www.fullofpotential.ca

We were made aware about this site a little while ago by a contact at Saatchi Toronto, who made the bold claim, “We think it’s one of the deepest, most engaging sites to ever come out of Canada” – which is confident if nothing else. Canada may not be widely known for its Flash handiwork, but this site is certainly a triumph in squeezing as much excitement out of a fairly uninspiring Toyota – but what do we know of cars? Highlights centre on one of the sleekest photo galleries you’ll ever find and a mini-game that bears a striking resemblance to a related banner advert that the designers have just had short-listed for an award at Cannes (www.socimedia.com/toyota_banners/road/stand_alone). Hopefully, we’ll be hearing more from what it’s like to work at Saatchi in the coming months, so watch out for that.

01

Every link is preceded by ‘Potential to...’, maintaining the brand’s values. The Sound System link cycles through the car’s impressive audio entertainment features

02

The site’s game has a *Grand Theft Auto* feel to it, even down to the lettering on the pseudo cover, just with a bit more popping of the Toyota Matrix’s hood and less drive-by gangland shootings in the hood

03

The gallery features some great Flash-based rotating and flipping, which immediately underlines the commitment to style shown throughout

04

The homepage lets you three-dimensionally navigate around the scene, with the Toyota Matrix at the epicentre. The mouse also acts as a pair of binoculars, which enables you to see links invisible to the naked eye

05

Another nice touch is the expand-and-collapse nature of the Polaroids as you browse your way through the selection

gallery

The cream of the web crop

Site Highlight



You won't find anything Flash-wise here you've not seen before, but as an example of fashion design, it shows a nice understanding of the brand. There's enough character to make you interested whether you like the bracelets or not.



01



02



03



04

"This brilliantly encapsulates the bohemian vibe of the fashion range on show by weaving gypsy imagery with some sharp Flash work"

Suzie G

DESIGNED BY: **Vivid Image, London**

URL: www.suzieg.co.uk

The nice people at Vivid Image were keen to tell us about this promotional effort for the Suzie G range of jewellery, although we're also pretty keen on another effort they have coming for Vauxhall. However, this is a cute and stylised solution that brilliantly encapsulates the bohemian vibe of the fashion range on show by weaving gypsy imagery with sharp Flash work. A quick video flies you through some nicely modelled vignettes, while some fairly haunting musical loops provide the sort of 'carny' spookiness associated with Papa Lazarou's circus. We really liked the revolving bracelet carousel found in the store section, charming preloaders and certainly the ant-infested scrapbook used to hold all the information behind the collection.

01

After clicking the Play Video link on the homepage, you'll begin zooming in and out through an impressive series of high-resolution brochure snapshots

02

Postcards always had more charm than emails or text messages, so it's nice to see them used in this Contact section

03

The site is little crawling with nice little touches, including various insects that scamper realistically across the scrapbook

04

Every so often on the homepage, birds will fly across the sky, contrasting the static background. There is also an accordion in the bottom-right of the page to hover over to adjust the volume of the music



bulletin

HOT NEWS FROM THE WEB DESIGN WORLD



Rob Ford, founder and principal of theFWA.com, gives his monthly pick of the coolest sites out there



Nike Lab
www.nikelab.com

Designed by: www.akqa.com
Global site for Nike's home of innovation for the Beijing Olympics.



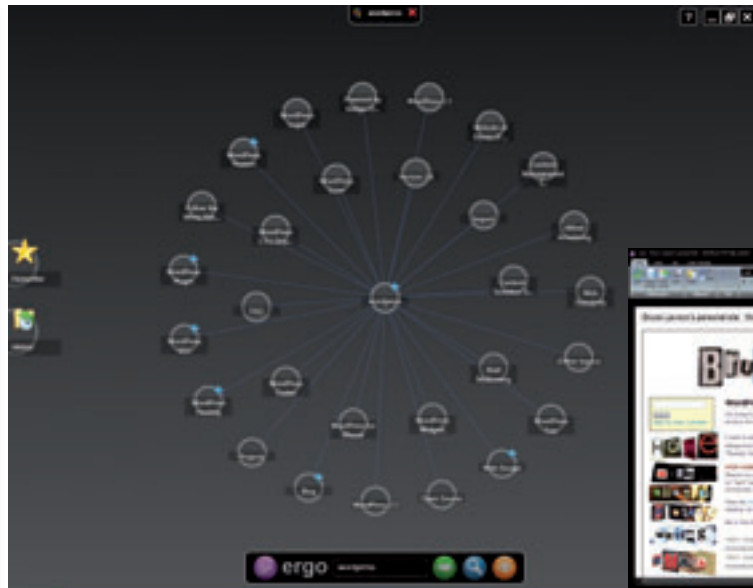
Logbook
www.dhl-discoverlogistics.com/logbook

Designed by: www.interone.de
Very slick and impressive interactive data bank for the logistics industry.



Mercedes SL65 AMG
www.mercedes-amg.com/SL65BlackSeries

Designed by: www.mercedes-amg.com
Sex on four wheels just arrived on the web.



Ergo uses the default Network option to visually display its results. All related searches are linked to the central node.

Google and Yahoo!'s search engines will soon both include Flash Player technology

Search, share and visualise with Ergo

IS ERGO SET TO REVOLUTIONISE THE WORLD OF SEARCH? YOU DECIDE

INVU PLC HAS announced the release of Ergo, a "revolutionary new software product". It is an internet and PC search tool that automatically collaborates, sorts and categorises millions of search results from sources such as Google, YouTube, Flickr, Wikipedia and your PC.

Vice president of Invu PLC, Justin Staines, explained, "You have to see it to believe it," and there is no doubt that it is well worth a look. However, those with long memories may remember the Blinkx search engine in the early days and how it used to display its results. The default setup in Ergo, Network, is very similar, but admittedly still a great concept. Beyond this simple comparison, Ergo has plenty more to offer. For starters, search results can be displayed in a number of guises, including a simple list, a tag cloud or a variation of 3D options. Justin Staines describes the concept perfectly. "Ergo's 3D Thumbflow visualisation allows users to flick through and preview search results similar to the album covers on Apple's iPhone. Ergo's interface is not only pleasing to use, it rapidly speeds up the time it takes to find what you're looking for. No longer do you have the arduous task of scrolling through pages of boring text results".

Ergo's search facilities and impressive visuals are not all it has to offer. Users can annotate, email, save or print

search results. In a click of a button, it's possible to draw, make notes and highlight anything found by Ergo. "The annotation feature is great for sharing or saving info and makes an incredible research tool for students, home and business users, but the possibilities for Ergo are endless. The search game is far from over," Staines concluded.

Ergo is available as a 30-day free trial and can be downloaded at <http://ergodownload.com>.



Ergo's 3D Thumbflow displays results in the same fashion as Apple's CoverFlow making it to easier and quicker to view results

Silverback turns computers into usability testing suite

CLEARLEFT BRINGS QUICK, EASY AND CHEAP USABILITY TESTING TOOLS TO ALL WITH NEW LIGHTWEIGHT APPLICATION

CLEARLEFT HAS LAUNCHED the Silverback application, its new lightweight application that brings cost-effective usability testing to all. Aimed at web designers and developers, the app enables businesses to ensure that their sites are as accessible as possible. And the best bit is it doesn't incur the usual costs and timeframes associated with traditional usability testing.

Silverback operates by running a series of test sessions on a standard laptop, which captures all on-screen activity and then composites the data into one movie for export. This approach allows designers and developers to conduct the testing anywhere and quickly see and analyse what users are doing on the screen.

Managing director at Clearleft, Andy Budd, said, "We've all been to websites that are difficult to navigate and use – this is often because many companies still think usability testing is only the preserve of big brands." He went on to say, "With Silverback, we're giving companies the ability to run their own usability tests quickly and easily – no matter what their size." Silverback is available directly from www.silverbackapp.com



Install the Silverback application and turn your laptop into a portable testing suite.

Cao Fei displays RMB City at the Serpentine Gallery

EXPERIMENTAL SECOND LIFE ART COMMUNITY SET FOR TWO YEARS AT THE SERPENTINE

CAO FEI is a 30-year-old Beijing-based artist who is fusing fantasy with the contemporary Chinese city in her construction of RMB City, an experimental art community in the internet-based virtual world of *Second Life*.

The Serpentine Gallery has commissioned Cao Fei to present *RMB City* in the Gallery's public space and to continue her investigation of this digital landscape and the development of *RMB City*. The artist has already spent over a year exploring the possibilities of *Second Life* through her avatar, China Tracy.

The complete *RMB City* is set to run for two years, with the buildings of the virtual city being occupied by partners, including institutions and individual collectors who will host exhibitions and cultural activities. All *Second Life* users are welcome to come and pay a visit.

The project is to explore the creative potential of an online art community, seeking to create the conditions for an expansive discourse about art, urbanism, economy, imagination and freedom. Throughout the actual operation period, the Gallery will show the progress of *RMB City* in its lobby and on its website.

To view the virtual city, head to the Serpentine Gallery site www.serpentinegallery.org or visit www.rmbcity.com



Cao Fei
RMB CITY: A Second Life City Planning 2007
Video still
Courtesy of Vitamin Creative Space
© 2008 Cao Fei



RMB CITY: Preview Center 2008
Second Life Snapshot
Courtesy of RMB City Group
© 2008 RMB City Group

Cao Fei is running her Internet based art community, based in *Second Life*, for two years at the Serpentine

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CFDevCon makes a return!

BRIGHTON WELCOMES A RAFT OF GREAT COLDFUSION SPEAKERS AND A FERVENT AUDIENCE OF DEVELOPERS FOR SEPTEMBER'S CONFERENCE

CFDEVCON IS BACK. With 28 confirmed speakers over 2 days, the conference promises an abundance of new ideas and stimulating discussion. Not just for ColdFusion devotees, the conference aims to provide all web pioneers with a chance to learn, develop and network. The event will be covering a huge array of subjects including APE Physics, web hacking for developers, practical code generation, best practices and web standards, off-

shoring, cryptography, Adobe AIR, jQuery, ColdSpring, Fusebox Scaffolding and much more. Audiences can expect to hear from distinguished speakers and notable representatives from Microsoft and Adobe. Names include Aral Balkan, Eric Nelson, Barney Boisvert, Hal Helms, Sean Corfield, Adam Lehman, Peter Bell, Andrew Shorten and Mark Drew. CFDevCon is happening in Brighton on 25-26 September and will be hosted in the Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel

– a spectacular sea-front location, and the perfect base from which to dive into the cultural maelstrom. The conference first took place in November 2006 and was a tremendous success – assembling over 200 attendees to hear respected experts speak on a wide variety of subjects. You can find out more by visiting www.cfdevcon.com



ColdFusion fans will descend on the Brighton shore this September for CFDevCon

Are you ready to Photo Face-Off?

IMAGINE PUBLISHING UNVEILS ITS LATEST INNOVATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY WEBSITE

ALL DESIGNERS LOVE a good photo and Photo Face-Off (www.photofaceoff.co.uk), the latest new online photograph comparison site from Imagine Publishing and dphotographer.co.uk, is a great way to get a look at some top notch photography.

The site has been described as 'pure genius' and 'highly addictive' and a single visit will keep you coming back for more. Photo Face-Off utilises the 28,000+ photographs that have already been uploaded to sister site dphotographer.co.uk, and randomly selects two shots to battle it out in a simple point-and-click competition to see which one wins the face-off. Developed for photographers by photographers, Photo Face-Off is accessible, fresh and full of inspirational images taken by amateurs and semi-pro photographers. Debbi Allen, Editor of *Digital Photographer* said, "Photo Face-Off is great fun and we're keen to offer a better, more interactive and more exciting website, the team behind dphotographer.co.uk has been working hard to develop this cool new feature." We love it, but be warned, this is far more addictive than you first think.



NEWS in brief



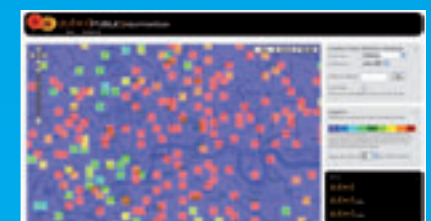
SECURE ONLINE BACKUP

Security software specialist Webroot recently announced the availability of its Secure Backup tool. This is a new data backup solution for home PC users, which protects digital photos, music and any other files from damage or loss. The service is delivered over the net and offers security and access from any internet-enabled PC.



ARGOS SITE BEATS RIVALS

The store with a little bit extra, Argos has come out on top in the web design stakes when compared with its rivals. Conducted by eye-tracking solutions company Realeyes, the test included ease of use, view-to-click and time to completion options. The Argos site came out top in all categories, proving a simple, well-executed shopping site is just what consumers want.



GOOGLE MAPS CITY CRIME

Whether you're living in London or just visiting, a quick look at the ZubeD Public Information (www.zubedpi.com) website really is a must. The site designed by ZubeDPI is a free service that maps London crime data, making it easy for the general public to access public information. The site uses a heat map to immediately help visualise each crime type across London. Powered by Google Maps, zubedpi.com's users can zoom in and click to view tables of detailed statistics.



hot stuff

Spotted an über-cool gadget that every self-respecting web designer should own? Tell us about it by emailing webdesigner@imagine-publishing.co.uk

The pages where we bring you gadgets that will help you in your work, that'll make your life easier and the odd one that serves no other purpose than looking funky!

1



1 Cassette badges
£5 per set
www.effektivedesign.co.uk

It's hard to believe that the compact cassette could still have such an impact 20-odd years after the introduction of the compact disc. However, it looks like cassettes are back in vogue, not for their unbridled quality of sound, but simply because they're retro and cool. Greig Anderson from Effective Design has added a new twist with his undeniably funky button badges. The cassette badges are a collection of six button badges that use the same cassette insert as its theme. These are presented within their very own cassette case, which has a reproductive insert styled up as a handwritten mix tape. It is this kind of attention to detail that we really liked. Inside, there is a mocked-up cassette that has the six buttons badges attached. The design is so precise and well thought out that we simply couldn't remove them. So just put them on your desk and let them look pretty.

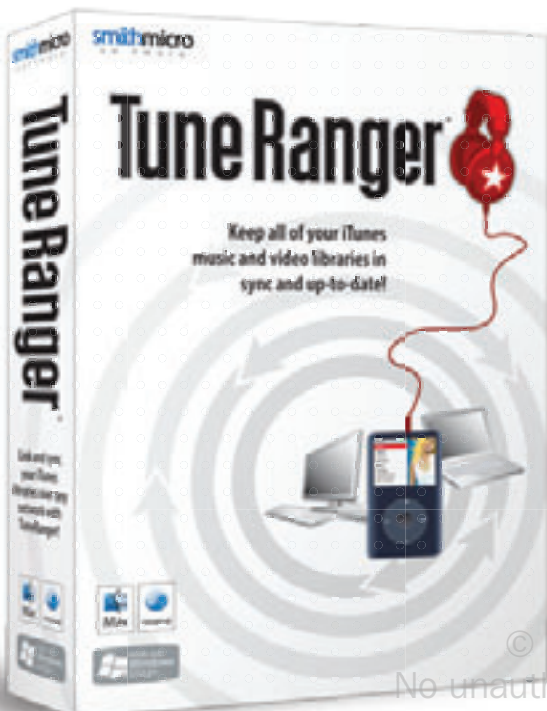
2 TuneRanger
£19.99
www.tuneranger.com

Having your favourite tunes pumping into your very soul when designing can be the perfect accompaniment to a truly inspired design. And designers being designers, you really need something that looks good, so the obvious choice is an iPod. However, iTunes being iTunes, it's not very keen on sharing and this can be a real pain. Thankfully, those lovely people at Smith Micro have come to the rescue with its TuneRanger software. For starters, users can say goodbye to single-library shenanigans. The software allows users to sync or merge any iPod with any iTunes library on Mac or Windows without restrictions. The cheeky little chap is not finished there. It has tools to optimise iTunes, manage duplicates, remove orphans and handle disconnected media files. And more impressively, TuneRanger can synchronise, copy or merge music and video from iTunes to iTunes across a network.

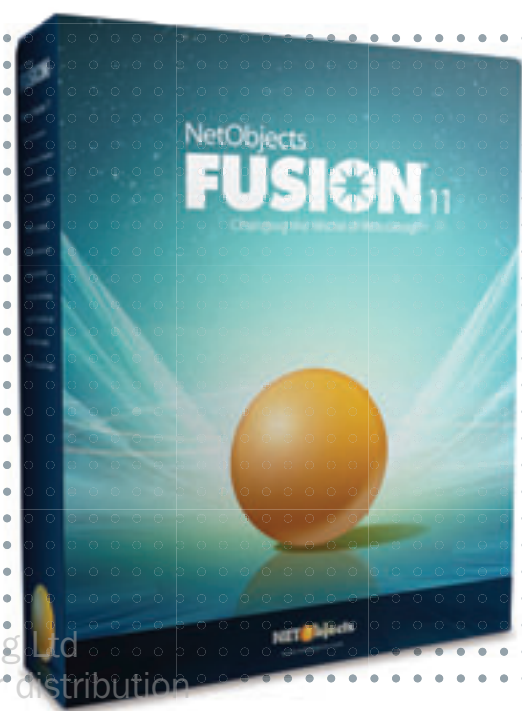
3 NetObjects Fusion 11
£154.95
www.netobjects.com

The latest instalment in the NetObjects Fusion series sees some impressive improvements over version 10. The new and improved Fusion 11 now includes a couple of headline-grabbing features in the shape of semantic XHTML, XML data integration, AJAX UI components, database integration and an integrated development environment. Code generation has been overhauled and now supports the generation of semantic XHTML code, making it more lightweight and search-engine friendly. XML data integration is simpler than it has ever been, with drag-and-drop insertion of data fields directly into a page. Keeping up with the latest web trends, 11 includes an array of AJAX widgets. On offer are tabbed panels, accordions and toggle panes to help with dynamic pages. Database connectivity has been carefully considered and includes support for MS Access, MySQL and XML data sources.

2



3





4

4 Asus Eee Box
£199
www.asus.com

Not content with producing an ultra-mobile PC that redefined the market, Asus has come up with another winner. The Asus Eee Box is a stylish, elegant, compact desktop that measures 216 x 178 x 25mm and boasts a 1.6GHz processor with 1GB of DDR2 memory and an 80GB hard drive, all linked up by Intel's 945GSE integrated chipset. Accompanying the hardware line-up is Asus' fast-boot technology Express Gate, which gets Windows to the desktop in double-quick time. For speedy net connections, there is in-built Gigabit Ethernet and the latest wireless standard WiFi 802.11n, which is up to eight times faster than the current g standard. There is also a multiformat card reader and USB ports for external storage solutions. For the environmentally friendly, the Eee Box thermal solution produces less noise and reduces power consumption by up to 90 per cent when compared with a traditional desktop.

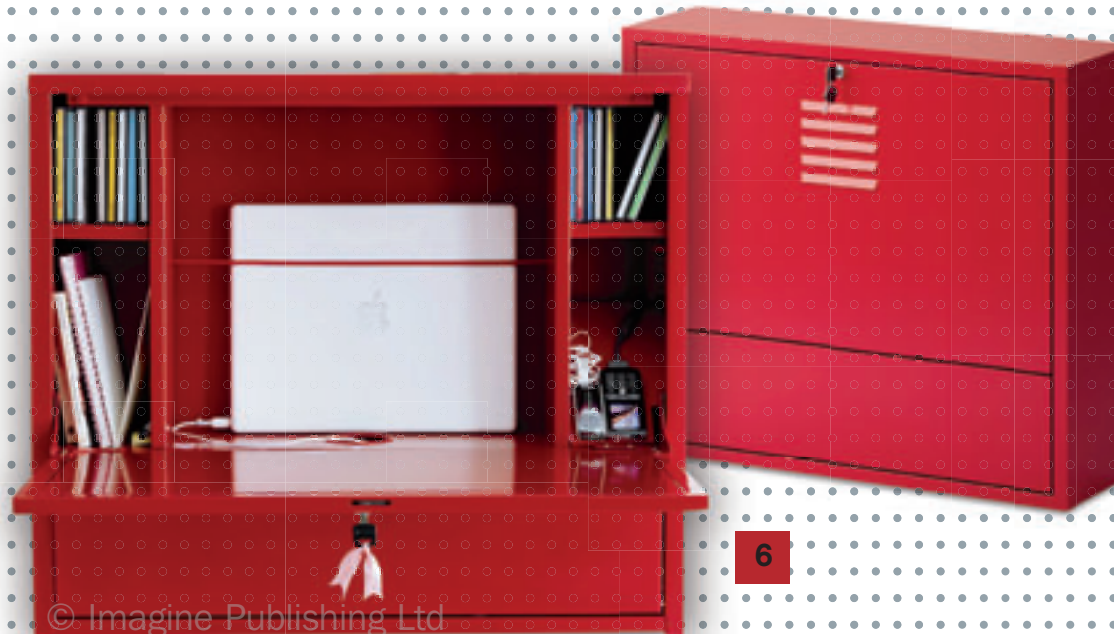
5 DirectVoxx Muso
£149.99
www.directvoxx.com

If you are like us, we like to take our iPods with us wherever we go, and that includes the car. However, trying to zip to the next tune can involve some unwanted manoeuvring, with the real issue of trashing the car as well as the iPod. This is where the very handy Muso comes in. It is a pocket-sized accessory for the iPod and iPhone that allows users to access their music with natural voice commands. The Muso synchronises with the user's iTunes library directly on first use, and requires no training to understand requests such as "Please play *Atomic Rooster*" or "Gimme some hardcore drum and bass". The Muso is totally mobile and self-powered and has a battery that lasts for around ten hours. Included in the package are a sync/charge cable and a remote control, allowing you to keep your iPod or iPhone in your pocket. The Muso is not available until December when DirectVoxx will be fulfilling orders directly.

6 IKEA PS laptop workstation
£29
www.ikea.com

For those designers who live in small studio flats in ridiculously overpriced real estate, space is at a premium. Those clever people at IKEA have come up with a neat solution that is not only functional, but looks pretty hot as well. The diminutive workstation measures 70 x 20 x 60cm, and can take a maximum load of 25kg when the unit is open. The storage compartment fits laptops with a screen size up to 17 inches, and a neat elastic cord holds the laptop in place when the door is closed. Sitting either side of the laptop is a couple of compact shelf compartments, ideal for storing books, gadgets, discs and even the odd sandwich. To keep the contents of the workstation safe, a lock is assigned to the lid with a couple of keys in case you lose one. The lower section of the workstation is the perfect size for hiding modems, routers and multiple sockets. The PS is available either in white or a striking rich red tone.

5



6

Message board

POST: Web Designer, Richmond House,
33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, BH2 6EZ

FORUM: www.webdesignermag.co.uk/forum

EMAIL: webdesigner@imagine-publishing.co.uk

The issue of standards looms large again, while we hopefully solve missing tutorial files and celebrate last month's feature. . .

Papervision Problems

Dear Web Designer,

My email isn't actually about your monthly mag, but in fact relating to the spin-off book title – so I hope you can still help me! I've recently purchased the third edition of *Web Design* and found that some of the tutorial files are missing. I'm trying to follow the Papervision 3D walkthrough and I notice that the files supplied are in fact for a neighbouring tutorial. Is it possible for you to help me get the real files because I'm pulling my hair out. Other than that it's a great product by the way and I'm keen to start picking the magazine up now!

Ryan Paul

Hi Ryan and we do hope you haven't plucked out all your hair in frustration. *Web Design Volume 3* is the latest in our series of compendium bookazine titles and so all the tutorials have been featured in *Web Designer* previously, so you're right to contact us. It's a funny one this because we had a few similar emails saying that the files were missing from the disc, but in fact those that were included weren't right. So yes, these files can be obtained by downloading the Flash set for issue 140 in the tutorial files section of our website at www.webdesignermag.co.uk. Or in your case, as with all those who have emailed, they are attached! Sorry for any inconvenience caused and we hope this ensures the problem is now solved.

Game for an ARG

Hey Web Designer,

Just wanted to say quality work on the ARG feature last month. This is the one side of online marketing that doesn't leave me cold and actually represents some of the most innovative stuff going on these days. I remember getting hooked on the A.I. Beast campaign and although I never got very far it really captured my imagination. That thing of finding webpages that made you think "should I be here?" and "what the deuce is this all about?" is so against the normal web design grain that it becomes really effective. In many cases the content completely goes off course from the product message but it just shows how subversive marketing is often the best. Great feature covering something seldom recognised – thanks team!

Troy Simmerink

Pleased you liked the feature, Troy – it was a topic we'd been wanting to do for some time. As you say the whole ARG thing is pretty cool in terms of eschewing the unwritten rules of direct communication and accessible design – but to good effect. The very vague nature of the campaigns almost does its best to turn away those who aren't truly dedicated, but the message only becomes stronger as a result. But remember this is a very clever and targeted technique that we wouldn't advise readers to adopt on their regular site designs. Can you imagine the BBC's homepage publishing news with a cipher and listing URL links from a dodgy answering machine? Sheer pandemonium.

MAIL OF THE MONTH

Standards SOS

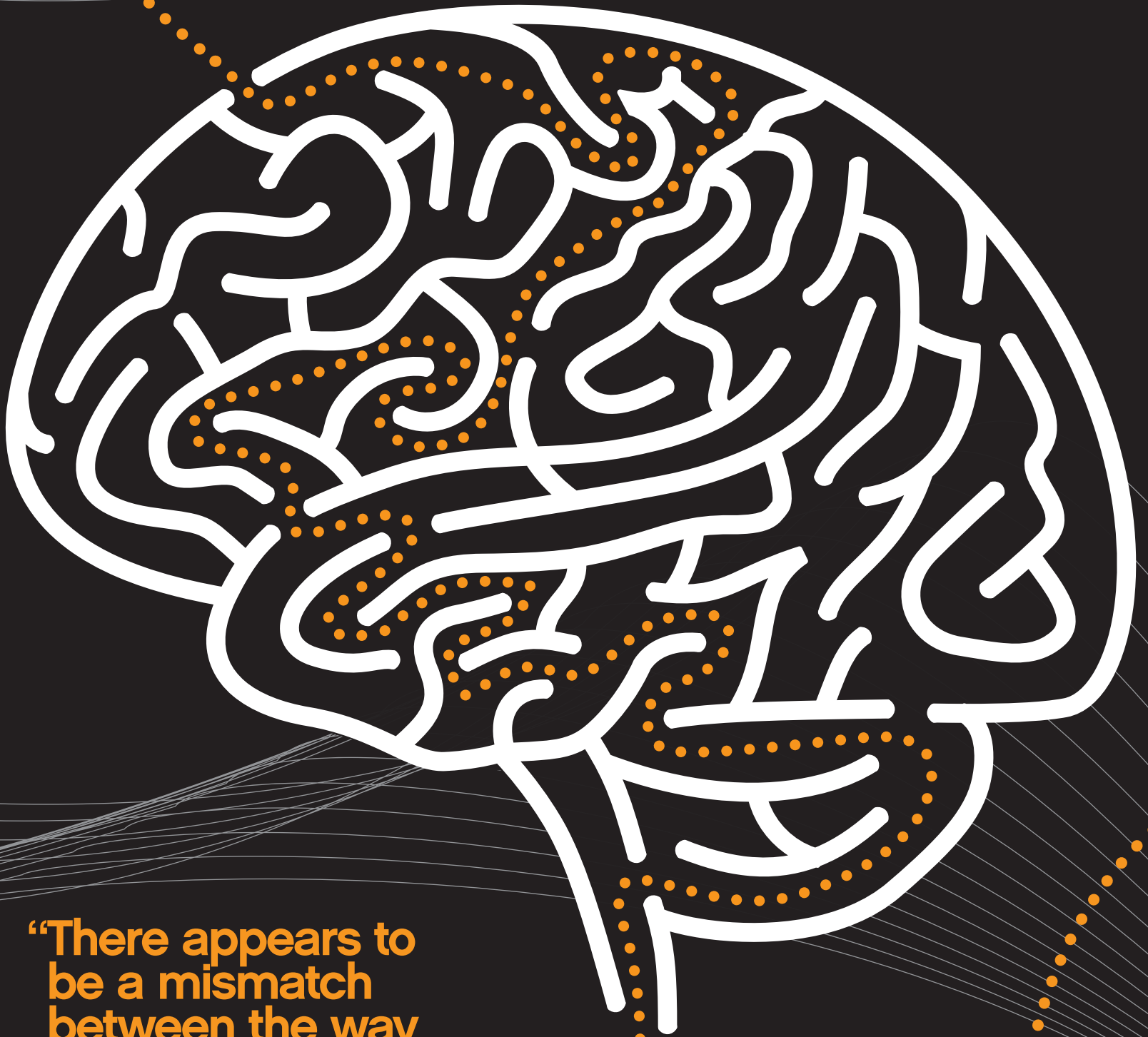
Dear WD crew,

Firstly thanks for delivering a consistently great magazine that continues to give me my web design hit every month. I'm not just writing to say cheers though, and instead I wanted to follow on from the letter you had last month about standards support and the conflicts we have in implementing them. Without doubt our integrity to design in a so-called 'correct' or universal way is compromised by the commercial companies who are fighting for internet ownership. While the W3C quietly tries to pass new specifications and guidelines, we have browser vendors offering varying levels of conformity or wholly new interpretations that developers have to workaround. I personally feel that this has a huge impact on the attitude towards the commitment to things like accessibility in so much that people question the motives. Why should we bother being strict and adhering to rules if the influential companies that drive the dotcom community won't help us? What is so ironic and irritating is that standards do aim to create a plateau for enriching the end user experience in ways that are undoubtedly commercial. We know that the web has an ability to connect the world but that shouldn't start and stop with providing multilingual support, especially when the number of platforms and devices keeps growing. Spreading the standards message is vital, so I'm pleased it's something you guys hold dear.

Kevin Temple

Well we're glad to be feeding your web design habit every issue, so don't go leaving us any time soon. Your letter is a great one, though, and you'll be relieved to hear that we're staying compliant to our craving for standards and echo your sentiments completely. Nevertheless, it is tough to point any kind of finger of blame, so we accept that the openness of the internet we all love makes any kind of formal regulation very difficult indeed. But that doesn't mean conceding defeat or losing our enthusiasm for making things better. Sure, we can criticise the big dotcom guns but only if us as developers do our best to do the right thing – and few can argue standards are positive. This month we took it upon ourselves to evaluate the browser position and it's fair to say the publicised fears in this respect aren't unjustified. Researching the piece and trying to establish what it all meant was, frankly, bewildering and that's mainly why reaching a conclusion was so difficult. They all have a big role to play and although each one has contributed to creating an uneven platform for true standards embracing development, the signs are that the will is now there to bring everyone together at last. Expect to see much more coverage on this in the months to come.





“There appears to be a mismatch between the way designers perceive websites and the way that users perceive them”

The Lost Art of Navigation

Site navigation is essential for users, but has it been forgotten? Graham Jones investigates



Graham Jones wonders if we've lost our way with site navigation

If I gave you the keys to my house and asked you to find a particular object in it, you would probably be able to get hold of it fairly quickly. Even though you've never been to my house, you'd have a pretty good idea where to find my computer, an alarm clock or my toothbrush. No matter what I asked you to look for, you'd be able to find it pretty quickly.

But how can you manage that, given that you have never been inside my home? The answer comes from some basic psychology that suggests we have mental representations of the world around us. These models are there to help us cope with the world. Think how difficult it would be to lead your everyday life if you had to randomly search for your computer every time you needed it? Or what about the struggle you'd have each morning if you couldn't remember where the shower was? The mental model that automatically tells your brain that the shower is in the bathroom, which is upstairs next to the bedroom, means you can cope easily. Knowing that computers are usually in a study or spare bedroom helps you get on with your work quickly and without frustration.

If you visit a strange city, you could probably hazard a good guess as to where the railway station would be – somewhere near the city

centre – or where to get some food in the evening – where all the bright lights are. Your mental model of what a typical city centre is like means that you can cope with the world you are surrounded by without too much difficulty.

So what's your mental model of a website? Indeed, is your mental model of a website the same as the next person's? We know that on the whole we all tend to have similar models of homes or cities – very familiar environments. That's why you'd be able to find things in my home. But what about websites – do we all share the same notion of what a website is, for example?

Very little research has been done on this, but one study in 2002 at Kansas State University (www.trnmag.com/Stories/2002/071002/Conceptual_links_trump_hyperlinks_071002.html) suggests that the mental models of websites that web designers have are remarkably different to the mental models of the users of the sites they design. There appears to be a huge mismatch between the way in which designers perceive websites and the way that users perceive them.

Nowhere is this mismatch more obvious than in the navigation system a web designer has chosen. If the navigation system reflects the mental model of a web designer too closely, there's a danger that website visitors will not be able





We applied the stress test to Annie Mac's Radio 1 page – above is the annotated version, using the instructions to the right

Navigation Stress Test

Think your site is a breeze for users to find their way around? Take this test – you may be surprised...

One of the popular ways of evaluating the navigation of your site pages is a method called the Navigation Stress Test. This system has been pioneered and publicised by an IBM user experience designer called Keith Instone in 1997 (<http://instone.org>) and involves printing out web documents and annotating them. By asking questions of the page and marking out its relation to the overall site, you can hopefully establish the 'three basic concerns' – Where am I? What's here? Where can I go?

The idea is that you end up with a very visual representation of the cognitive processing and decision making that goes through the minds of your visitors. If you find that you have real trouble identifying things easily then you might want to ask how those experiencing your site for the first time will get on.

We've had a go using the instructions printed below and Annie Mac's Radio 1 page www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/mashup for the sake of illustration. Check out our results and have a go yourself!

WHAT TO DO

Choose a low-level page from your (or any other) site

Print the page, preferably in black and white

Assume you are seeing the page for the first time and follow the list below

QUESTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS:

- What is the chosen page about? > **Draw rectangle around title of page**
- What site is this? > **Circle site name**
- What are the major sections of this site? > **Label with 'X'**
- What major section is the page in? > **Draw a triangle around**
- What is 1 level up from here? > **Label with a 'U'**
- How do I get to the home page of the site? > **Label with an 'H'**
- How do I get to the top of this section of the site? > **Label with a 'T'**
- What does each group of links represent? (Circle and mark as follows:)
- **D** = More details, sub-pages
- **N** = Nearby pages, same section as current page
- **S** = Pages on same site, not as near
- **O** = Off-site pages
- How might you get here from the site home page? (indicate page flow)

“Structural navigation certainly helped people find their way around. Standard terms began to creep in: Home, About Us and so on”

to find their way around. The Kansas study reveals that website users have a contextual model – they associate the context of the content more easily than the structure.

In the early days of web design – or, to be more precise, website production – all you could do was produce hyperlinks as a means of navigation around the few pages that existed. And those hyperlinks were almost always based on context. Only when structure-based design programs (like NetObjects Fusion) hit the scene did the designer get the opportunity to easily structure a site with sections, subsections, departments and so on. This led to structurally based navigation, rather than being centred on contextual connections between the various bits of content.

Even so, structural navigation bars and lists certainly helped people find their way around websites. Standard terms began to creep in: Home, About Us, Contact Us and so on. Several standardised sections of websites became regular territory for designers. Indeed, web design

programs even incorporated several of these standardised structural elements in website creation wizards. Ask Microsoft Expression to set you up a new website and it will happily create a basic index page, but will add a Contact Us page, an About Us page and several others of these now de facto standards.

This structural approach certainly helped web designers and site developers; working out where to place a particular item of content was easy as you had a good idea of which section it deserved to go in. However, the more sections a site needed, the wider the menu bar had to be. So it wasn't long before web designers resorted to vertical menus, mostly on the left-hand side of the page.

In the Web 1.0 world, this led to two standard methods of navigation: a menu bar across the top of the page, or a longer menu in a left-hand column. The importance of such clear navigation in those relatively early days has meant that site visitors have been able to develop a mental model of a typical site.

Keren Lerner | Visual communication specialist

Top Left Design specialises in providing usable, eye-catching sites – but how is it done?

Q&A



Keren Lerner knows what makes a successful site

Keren Lerner is a visual communication specialist who runs Top Left Design (<http://topleftdesign.com>). Here, she explains her views on usable navigation.

WD: How creative can you be with website navigation?

KL: Creativity has its place, but you need to be clear with the names you use for the navigation links. Some link names should be standard. I know people like to come up with fun link names, but the point of navigation links is to bring people to areas of the site where they would like to find certain information. I recommend always having a link called 'Home' to bring people back to the homepage and a link called 'Contact' at the end of all the other links to bring people to the contact information. You can change some terms; for instance, the 'About' page can be called 'Who we are' or 'Our team' or even 'Our philosophy'.

WD: How many navigation links should there be?

KL: That's always a debating point. I recommend no more than seven links in any link area. You can have navigation links on the top or the left, but if you have eight or more then it tends

to look quite cluttered. I see a lot of content management system sites where the client has been given a site with seven main links, but has the freedom to create more. This makes the site look messy and so it loses credibility. The number of links you have also has an impact on the text size you can use. This is something you have to have a designer's eye for, but all the different navigation systems need to be in balance in order to show the right hierarchy of information. I recommend getting a good design signed off before allowing the HTML to be built.

WD: If we can only have seven navigation links, how do we include all the navigation we need to?

KL: Not all of your navigation needs to be in your main menu; it can be placed elsewhere. Your homepage and other landing pages will allow you to include your main navigation links, but you can also include other links on each page to special areas of the site you would like people to visit. These might say 'Read what clients have to say about us' or 'Latest Offers'. Anything you would like to highlight can therefore be designed into the layout, no matter what software

you use. It is important to consider these things at the outset when planning the site, so that your design incorporates them in a clear and effective way.

WD: Are current design trends, such as greater use of Flash, having an impact on navigation?

KL: I think it means designers need to concentrate more on the essential issues. For instance, we have all become very familiar and efficient with using websites and now expect to navigate our way to and interact with them extremely quickly. As a result, we are less patient with those websites that are difficult to use. Also, we have learnt to process information on screen with extreme rapidity. Being impatient to read and assimilate as much as possible in ever shorter periods of time, we instead scan the page and click instantly onto the first item of interest our eyes alight upon. So the navigation really has to work and be highly efficient. Newer software also means we sometimes forget the basics. Using live text for links instead of images is important for two reasons – it helps with search-engine ranking, but also makes the site more accessible for visually impaired people who are using screen readers.

“It seems that top menu bars have become as familiar as blue lines on road maps”

Researchers working for Fidelity Investments discovered how important navigation location was during a study of a new design for their website, which they conducted in 2005. Several alternative navigation options were tested among 700 users, but the navigation option that led to the lowest error rate in finding specific information was a menu bar across the top of the page. In other words, the study confirmed that navigation at the top of the page was more closely linked to the user's mental model of a website, since they were more able to find relevant information using a menu bar than they were using a button menu with rollovers, or one of four other alternatives.

In a sense, it's a bit like a UK road map. No matter who draws up the map or who publishes it, motorways are always big, fat, pale blue lines. It means that no matter which map we buy, we always know how to locate a motorway. It seems that menu bars at the top of the page have become as familiar as blue lines on road maps. Since so many sites use such navigation, we know where to go to find our way around.

But it's not just giving users a familiar method of finding the navigation system – it also has implications for accessibility. Peter Abrahams (www.it-analysis.com/about/author/47/peter_abrahams.php) says that top menu bars are

important for disabled users in particular. He said, “The top menu bar is an important accessibility feature for all users as it not only provides quick access to the relevant areas, but it should also give a clear view of what the site owner believes the site is about. Having a clear view of the structure is important for any user, but for people with visual impairments, being able to build up this mental image is really important.”

However, in spite of the need to meet accessibility standards and the emphasis that structural-based navigation put on the whole notion of menu lists and menu bars, the advent of rich internet applications such as Flash-based design has meant that many designers are now experimenting with alternative navigation systems. What was once a central theme of good website design has now been somewhat sidelined.

Now, designers are looking towards what has been termed the 'speaking block' method of navigation. This is where web designers have moved away from the menu bar towards



Navigation critique

So how good is modern website navigation? We contrast two different websites from two of the biggest global brands to see how effective they are in getting us from A to B...

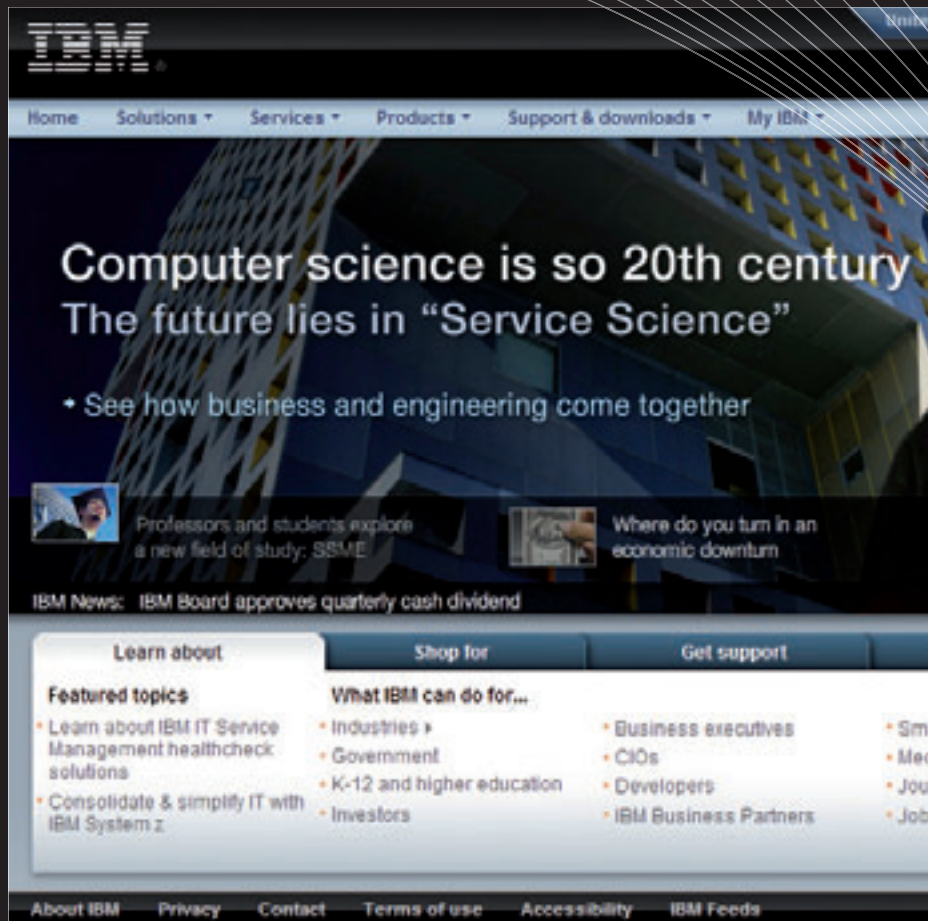
IBM

www.ibm.com

IBM reinvented itself as a consultancy firm and IT service provider. The company's main website reflects that change by showing us that it is people-focused without any sign of a computer or mainframe on the page. A Flash-based design, the homepage acts as a kind of Mission Control, with links to everywhere else. The navigation includes a six-section menu bar as well as a panel of graphical links and a further set of links based on specific user actions, using the speaking-block navigation style.

Navigation pros

The first noticeable aspect of the navigation is that in spite of using Flash design, it has a top menu bar, meaning that the main navigation is exactly where people expect it to be. There is also a search facility above the menu bar, so even if you cannot find what you want in the 371 links that inhabit the front page, you can quickly access it. Links are neatly put into an area only 930 x 580px, indicating that with planning you can cram a great deal of navigation into a small space. The site also provides contextual navigation. For instance, you can find a security health scan within the Support section, where many people might expect it to be. That's in spite of the fact that really, to IBM, it's a product. Interestingly, the top menu bar is repeated in a different order, in a Flash-based horizontal speaking block. This means that the site combines different user experiences in the same place. More traditional users looking for the top menu bar will find what they need there, whereas the individual whose mental model works on the speaking block concept will also find what they want by ignoring the top menu bar. As a result, the navigation works for a variety of mental models of websites. Once into the site users also see a vertical menu, acting as a 'breadcrumb trail' to show people exactly where they are. This fulfils one of Jakob Nielsen's navigation usability requirements.



blocks combining images and text and colour codes to explain to visitors where they should go next and what they can expect to find there. Navigation has been moved from showing people what's available on the whole site towards what might be termed 'pathway navigation'. Users are now presented with only a handful of options to choose from – often in Flash-based boxes on a page – giving them relatively few choices as to what to do with a site.

Chris Rourke, who runs Uservision (www.uservision.co.uk), an eye-tracking and usability testing company based in Edinburgh, thinks this could be a good move. "If a user is unsure which link to click on, it shows itself in the

eye-tracking data through eye movements between the two or three options they are considering clicking on," he explains. "With clearer navigation, their eye movements show a clearer direction to the place they want to go."

Rourke also suggests that things like rollovers, additional text to support menu items and previews of subsequent pages can all help users find their way around a site, because they provide confidence that they are choosing the right links to go to and that they are in control.

The trend towards pathway navigation using 'speaking blocks' certainly appears to be backed by usability specialists, since it all tends to make it easier for a user. However, it can also mean laziness

among web designers. They could produce simple speaking-block navigation that sends people in directions they don't want to go in. The user then either becomes frustrated because they can't find what they really came for, or worse, they abandon the site and search for an alternative.

The way out of that is to ensure that the website navigation is closely linked to the mental model of the users. Chris Rourke explains, "A key thing is to provide a good navigation system based on the user's mental model and that should be based on research with end users. Methods like card sorting are a great way to discover how people group and label things on websites. People like to know where they are going before they click on a link. This is still true, even though pervasive broadband means that the cost people pay in time for clicking the wrong link is less."

Even though speaking-block or pathway navigation may seem clear, it might not fit the mental model of the users of your website. They could therefore click on the wrong link, or be

"Allowing designers complete creative freedom could mean that they're taking their 'eye off the ball'"

“The most frequently clicked on areas are the top and the left of the page”



SONY

www.sony.co.uk

Sony is a leading electronics brand and it has a professionally designed website that reflects its brand values well. The homepage is focused on products and includes shopping facilities and other product-related features, such as the ability to register a product. There is only a short top menu bar with a mere three items in it – well short of Keren Lerner's requirement for around seven items. The navigation works in a variety of ways – there are direct links, slide-in effects and tabs. Some navigation items are text, others are images.

Navigation cons

At first sight this looks well designed, but actually it's confusing. The top menu bar doesn't give enough options, so it forces the user to look elsewhere. However, when you do look elsewhere, you can easily become confused. There are, for instance, navigation links with potentially confusing names such as 'World of Sony', which actually only takes you to recent product additions. 'Where to buy' takes you to a list of options including a link called 'Where to buy', which leads back to the same page – a breadcrumb trail that includes too many steps. The 'Buy online' link, however, takes you to a different website that uses different navigation, so even if users have mastered the varied navigation on the main site, they then have to cope with different navigation on the shopping pages. The homepage also uses what looks like speaking-block or pathway navigation, but it falls short of providing enough information to help users make a selection because the speaking blocks use untitled images to convey the links. Rollovers do provide caption information, but the text doesn't appear with the image. As a result, the site leaves users confused about where to look for navigation information, which combined with an inadequate top menu means that this site is difficult to navigate. It's compounded because it doesn't appear to know quite what it is.

unsure of where to go as what's provided doesn't match their model of the website. Furthermore, if the navigation options are not in the place where their mental model has them (often at the top of the page), then users will not even find the appropriate links in the first place.

This is shown in a blog by designer Nathan Borror who produces Playground Blues (www.playgroundblues.com). Unless you're quick, you won't realise that the brightly coloured strip down the left-hand side of the page is actually the menu bar. And when you do hover over a colour in the strip, you are given a slide-in icon, leaving you to work out what it means and whether or not it is where to go. It's a lovely design implementation, but whether it fits the mental model most people have of websites is debatable.

Even more experimental is Nickad (www.nickad.com); you don't even see the navigation unless you actually click the mouse. The navigation menu then pops up anywhere you make a click – and it only sticks around if you keep the

mouse button held down. Hardly what you might call intuitive, and so far removed from the familiarity of top page menu bars that it could be rendered useless to many visitors.

The recently revamped BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk) is an example of speaking-block navigation. Indeed, the whole of the front page is now just navigation, but again it's doubtful as to whether it actually fits the mental model people have of the BBC website – there is just so much navigation, it's almost overwhelming link overload.

Heat maps of website usage show that the most frequently clicked on areas of a page are the top and the left of the page – eyes and clicks tend to follow the shape of the letter 'F'. So even the BBC's front page is turning its back on established usability knowledge by putting its pathway navigation in less 'hot' parts of the page.

Usability guru Jakob Nielsen reckons that the vast majority of websites are not getting these basics right. In the rush towards Web 2.0, says Nielsen, many developers have ignored

the primary elements they need to ensure work properly. "People just want to get in, get it and get out," he told the BBC last year. And that obviously means clear, usable, accessible navigation – something many sites are now ignoring in the rush towards newer technologies and the software that allows better creative expression of a designer's ideas. The mere existence of Flash means a web designer can do things they could only dream of in the past, but allowing designers almost complete creative freedom could mean that they're taking their 'eye off the ball' in terms of the principal function of what they are doing – helping users find their way around.

So how can you be sure that you are striking the right balance between creativity and fitting the mental model of websites, so that users can find their way around? Usability testing is key, but it can be expensive. However, as the usability experts at Amberlight (www.amber-light.co.uk) explain in their report on return on investment of usability testing, "The cost of employing



Bartek Szopa | Interface developer at Cognifide

We speak to another industry insider to get his views on website navigation development

Q&A



Bartek Szopa gives us the inside info on interfaces

Bartek Szopa is an interface developer at Cognifide, a software development consultancy specialising in the technical delivery of complex content-managed and database-backed websites and applications.

WD: Experimental website design was once just the province of the personal websites of new media designers, but it seems that there has been somewhat of an erosion of importance placed on good, effective site navigation in modern design. Would you agree?

BS: Visitors to websites are very often searching for a specific piece of information and will quickly move on to another site if they don't find what they are looking for quickly and easily. As the amount of the information on a website grows, its structure gets bigger and more complex and it then becomes more difficult for users to navigate.

Effective navigation is a vital component in users being able to quickly find the information they need and to understand the structure of the website. Users should always have a clear picture of where they are within the website, where they can go and where they should go to find what they need.

WD: With the accessibility regulations now in force and a move to more experimental design, can the two be reconciled?

BS: Accessibility regulations don't make a designer's life easier, but they are not restrictions but rather rules to uphold. With this in mind, a professional web developer can turn even very experimental design into an accessible website using clean and semantic HTML, well-prepared cascading style sheets (CSS) and wise use of JavaScript.

WD: Do you think that the so-called rules of good website interface design can now be broken?

BS: There is that old adage of 'rules are made to be broken', and it's always a courageous web designer that breaks them and shows us a new world of design. Having said that, no one will spend their time on a site if they need to think about how to use it.

WD: Is this possible because web users are now more savvy to navigation online?

BS: Internet users are certainly more familiar with various types of website navigation, but I think that in general they recognise and use some common navigation types and can be sceptical about trying something experimental. New styles need to be clear so users don't need to think how it works, and they should be able to understand it just as they see it.

WD: Are they more visually astute and open to new ways of moving through a site?

BS: This may be true to a very specific group of people, for example, early adopters of technology and daily internet users. Almost certainly, this group are open to try new ways of using the web and accessing information, but this doesn't extend to all users in general as the 'average' user likes to use things they already know.

Naturally, everything depends on the target audience of the website, and this is what the best design and development teams work with when planning and implementing a new site.

WD: How has the movement away from static pages to Flash GUIs and RIA interfaces changed the way we should view navigation?

BS: Without question, modern technologies allow us to build very dynamic and visually attractive websites. Flash or CSS and JavaScript effects can be used to create clear and readable navigation that will give visitors instant access to the information they need, but we need to be careful with experimenting too much.

WD: Do you think we now know the DNA of good website interface design?

BS: I'm not so sure if we really know the whole DNA of good website interface design, but rather a set of 'rules' or 'conventions' to build websites in the right way; to make a visitor feel safe and comfortable when browsing the site. A great amount of research has been made in terms of usability and user experience to build up those rules and best practices, but there is a lot more to try in the space of web design and we just need some brave designers to break some of these conventions and pave new ways.

WD: Could you suggest websites that you perceive as having good and equally bad navigation?

BS: Apple.com [www.apple.com] is an example of a website with very clear, functional and innovative navigation. At the very top of the website, there is a main navigation bar with clearly defined sections of the website and a search field, which gets the most relevant results and places them grouped in a handy pop-up as you type. This gives almost instant access to any information within the website.

For a contrast, let's have a look at WHSmith's UK website [www.whsmith.co.uk]. For a main navigation they use a quite common tabs metaphor, but it may be a little confusing as it doesn't really work like them. Selecting a tab changes its background but it doesn't feel connected to the rest of the website, so the tab metaphor that was intended is lost.

Another misleading part of the WHSmith site is a list of the links placed between main navigation and a search bar. It's even hard to find what kind of links it contains as it really varies on different pages. It seems that all the links that couldn't be placed anywhere else just got their place in this list. It's really confusing and hard to understand for a new visitor.

“There is a lot more to try in the space of web design and we just need some brave designers to break some of these conventions”



Jakob Nielsen stresses the importance of being user-aware

Jakob's view

Usability guru Jakob Nielsen has always had an opinion on usability and navigation is no exception

According to Jakob Nielsen, you need to remember that your website visitors spend most of their time on other websites. That means their expectation of your site is coloured by their experience of other websites. Failing to fall in line with the conventions means your site becomes less usable. For navigation, that means top of page or left-hand column, rather than experimental methods. A more modern concern is the fact that many design elements now use graphical features that make them look like advertisements. "Selective attention is very powerful, and web users have learned to stop paying attention to any ads that get in the way of their goal-driven navigation. Unfortunately, users also ignore legitimate design elements that look like prevalent forms of advertising," says Nielsen. So that means your navigation must not look like a banner, invoke pop-ups or use animation – people associate these with adverts and will therefore pass your navigation system by.

Nielsen also suggests that text in navigation menus should be ranged to the left, not justified to the right. He explains, "Aligning a navigation menu with the right margin might look cool, but the resulting ragged left margin severely reduces the speed with which users can scan the menu and select their preferred options."

It's also important, says Nielsen, to let people know where they are in your site, and to give them their current location using 'breadcrumb' trails. "Breadcrumbs have always been a secondary navigation aid," he explains. "They share this humble status with site maps. To navigate, site visitors mainly use the primary menus and the search box, which are certainly more important for usability. But from time to time, people do turn to the site map or the breadcrumbs, particularly when the main navigation doesn't quite meet their needs."

Michael Smith | Founder/director of Cog Design

We speak to the man behind one of the UK's most successful arts-based design companies

Q&A



Michael knows his stuff when it comes to design

WD: It seems that there has been somewhat of an erosion of importance placed on good, effective site navigation in modern design. Would you agree?

MS: I'm not sure I would. What there has been is a massive increase in communications media across the board. There are still as many (if not more) great designers who understand the need for clear navigation and information architecture, but there's also many more people who have never engaged with the idea that a website is a communication tool. There's room for both extremes and everything in the middle, in the same way that print design or TV advertising has its artists and also has its communicators.

WD: With the accessibility regulations now in force and a move to more experimental design, can the two be reconciled?

MS: They can, but it does require a depth of understanding that many web designers aren't prepared to engage with. At Cog, we specialise in producing visually rich sites that are accessible to all. We tend to steer away from whacky navigation because

our clients' audiences tend to be using our sites as a means to gain information rather than a resource/community in themselves, but there's no reason why the two can't be integrated. See www.radacadabra.org.uk for a site that is visually rich but accessible.

WD: Do you think that the so-called 'rules' of good website interface design can now be broken?

MS: It really does depend on who the audience is. There's so much communication being directed at web-savvy, urban twenty-somethings, and this audience can definitely make the leap to a more sophisticated navigation system, but it's going to be a long time before the rest of the world will learn that websites aren't printed sheets to be read left to right, top to bottom.

WD: How has the movement away from static pages to Flash GUIs and RIA interfaces changed the way we should view navigation?

MS: I'm not convinced that there has been a significant movement in that direction. Again, options for communication have just

grown, the RIA interfaces are right for some users/media/outlets, but other options are still there and are still a better solution for the vast majority of sites. It does seem strange that we are thinking that static pages are the tradition/convention; around seven or eight years ago, you couldn't go to a designer's site without being baffled by a Flash GUI. That was all swept away, but advances in technology are now making it practically possible to bring them back. I'm sure it's just a pendulum that'll keep on swinging – there will always be a balance and most people will use a bit of both.

WD: Do you think we now know the DNA of good website interface design?

MS: No, no, no. We're not a million miles away, we've taken a couple of big steps. We're still in the infancy of knowing how to use this magical media (or even knowing what the media is). I can't see that we can stop the process or feel like we know what makes it tick. For example, why are we still using QWERTY keyboards that give us RSI? Why do we still stare at screens and communicate in two dimensions?

“Move away from the mental model people have of websites and you risk losing visitors”

usability methods is considerably cheaper than that associated with redesigning an end product.” They highlight the example of Staples.com, which had a navigation button without an associated label. By labelling the button, it led to fewer shopping cart abandonments. It's not just making navigation easier for the user, but it can also clearly impact the profitability of a site.

You don't always need to go to the expense of employing usability experts to ensure your website navigation actually works for your users. You can, in fact, do it yourself, using software such as Morae (www.techsmith.com). This records user on-screen activity (such as mouse movements and

clicks) together with a video of where they looked. Together they can help you analyse how people use your navigation and check whether, as Chris Rourke from Uservision says, they are confident in using the site. The base Morae version is just \$195, although the full package costs \$1,495. Even so, it can be less than employing a usability company.

Usability testing with Morae will also help you work out what parts of your site people actually use to find their way around. Not everyone will stick with a menu bar, even if you place it in the expected position of the top of the page. As accessibility expert Peter Abrahams points out, navigation “includes all tools and techniques that

enable a user to get from where they are to where they need to be on the website”. So navigation is not just about menu bars, but about links, search options, hot spots, access keys and so on. It's about every process people might use to find their way around.

So to go back to the subject upon which we started – finding things in my house – you could only succeed if my house is typical and contains all the various things in it you would expect to help you. If I had an experimental design, perhaps with several floors where each floor was one room, and each room was built around moods rather than functions, you'd be hard-pressed to find what I asked you to look for. And it's the same on the web. Move away from the mental model people have of websites and you risk losing visitors. No matter how creative you have been and how wonderful and amazing other web designers find your work, if users find it all too difficult to locate exactly what they're looking for, then all your work may have been for nothing.



BEHIND THE SCENES: THE LYNX EFFECT

The Lynx brand has been built on a solid basis consisting of beautiful women and... not much more! Australian agency Amnesia didn't fail to remember a winning formula when it came to the brand's new website

No disrespect intended to those who live in the Midlands, but swapping the windswept streets of Leicester with the sun-soaked scenery of Sydney, Australia must sound like a dream to most. In 1996, that dream was made a reality for Iain McDonald, co-founder of interactive agency Amnesia. And with clients like Pepsi, Xbox and Lynx on its books, his dream has never looked in danger of fading.

In 1998, McDonald co-founded Amnesia along with Terry Carney. Amnesia is the Australian office of Avenue A | Razorfish, and has been awarded the AdNews Interactive Agency of the Year in Australia for the last two years running.

Charged with the task of bringing the Lynx brand firmly into the advanced digital domain, Amnesia set about creating a site that would keep users coming back regularly and also prompt them to tell their friends about it. The Lynx Effect website has certainly accomplished that, with a multitude of interactive

components. There's 101 Lynx things to do before you die on the Profile page, a minigame that goes under the intriguing name of 3 Girls, 2 Cans, not to mention the pages that encourage you to sign, clean and zoom in on large images of bikini-clad women.

Don't waste time in a search engine – go there directly with www.lynxeffect.com.au.

IM: Iain McDonald, executive creative director and co-founder of Amnesia

WD: To kick off, could you tell us a little about Amnesia and the type of creative work you do?

IM: It sounds like a cliché, but like most creative agencies we like to try to get closer to the 'bleeding edge' and push the boundaries hard (both creatively and technically). It means we often go through a bit of pain getting there, but the rewards are high when it comes together. In Australia it's a highly contested creative space, but we're lucky enough to have some

amazing clients like Pepsi, Disney, Smirnoff and Xbox, who keep us on our toes day to day. Having a great technical team also makes life easier during the ideas phase of a project.

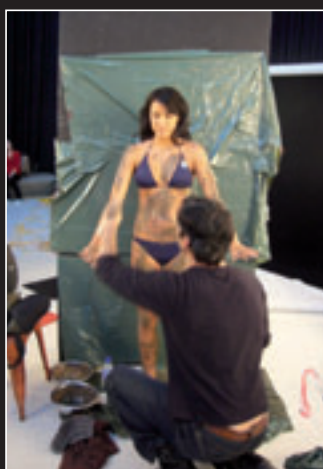
WD: Regarding the Lynx site, how did Amnesia come to work on the project?

IM: Lynx is one of the 'golden creative advertising accounts' in Australia and we were one of five creative digital agencies invited to pitch a little over a year ago. It was a huge win for us. Interestingly, we presented very little creative at the pitch, and no finished artwork at all. We went in heavy on strategy and big ideas. It was slightly risky, especially when you know that competing agencies will be presenting amazing visuals, but a great idea presented in a compelling way can sometimes do the trick, which luckily for us, it did.

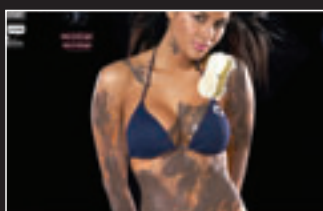
WD: What was the original brief for the project, and how close was the finished product?



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01: Iain McDonald and Terry Carney co-founded Amnesia in 1998 and have since worked with some big clients

02: There probably are better jobs than covering bikini models in mud, but we're unsure if we can list them right now

03: The Flash implementation of what is a fairly simplistic visual technique is extremely well realised here

04: Thankfully the Amnesia team never found themselves stranded without a paddle when it came to this project

05: We couldn't resist leaving our own little mark on the free drawing section of this fantastically cheeky site

IM: Surprisingly, we did not have the usual client brief of 'build a website'. In fact, the Lynx Effect site was born out of an overarching digital strategy rather than a specific task/objective. Lynx's task to us was little more than: 'We want to do amazing things in digital – tell us how'. The site was a part of the answer, but as the newly appointed digital agency, we had to think well outside just what the website would look like. As for the idea behind the Lynx Effect site, our strategy had revealed that all you really needed to show was the body of a hot girl and a can of Lynx. Job done! I think the final site we delivered is pretty much true to that. It's so ridiculously simple, but I think it works.

WD: When working on the Lynx project, what roles did Amnesia take on in the site development? How active were Lynx throughout the process?

IM: Naturally, the client has to buy into the ideas and sign off the finished product, but in-between that, we own the whole creative process. It's easier when a client trusts you to do this, and Lynx gave us that. Nick Boyden, the brand manager for Lynx, is a great person to work with – he's a 'go for it' kind of guy. It makes the job easier, although the pressure is on to get it right.

06: The lush photography formed the perfect backdrop for a site experience that blends tongue-in-cheek glamour with a wealth of superbly rich interactivity

07: A YouTube influence makes an appearance by serving up the most recent raft of Lynx TV commercials. You'll even find that one with the dodgy-eyed guy

08: So many ideas, so little time. The Amnesia team could happily add more content from the many hilarious brainstorming sessions they had in the beginning

WD: Flash is the primary technology used throughout the entire site. What obstacles/problems/issues, ie optimisation, did this introduce to the design/development team?

IM: It was important that the site felt very simple to use. This often means that you end up spending more time getting the technology to work. We didn't hit any major bumps, but we've been ironing out a few crinkles over the last six months. I think that when we launched, we were one of the first sites to really use the Flash full-screen feature – this took a bit of work to get the UI spot-on, but it all went pretty well.

WD: The whole site is awash with great ideas that are clever and well executed. One of our favourites is Dirty Girls, but we also loved Fakeovers, Sign the Girl and Boss Mode. How much input came from Amnesia with regards to these elements?

IM: The ideas are all from within the Amnesia team, and it was hilarious going through brainstorming on this job... we probably have about 50 more concepts lined up that we'd love to squeeze in. That's the beauty of the site... it is really just a shell waiting for content. Perfect for a fast-moving brand like Lynx.

WD: What type of design assets did the Lynx people provide Amnesia with, and how much did you have to create yourselves?

IM: We had some can shots and logos. That's about it! Everything else you see, we shot or designed from scratch – with the exception of the supplied TVCs in campaigns.

WD: How many designers/developers were used to finish the project, and what role did each of them take?

IM: In all, I think around 18 people have been involved (there are around 70 at Amnesia in total). The team was split across Account Management, Strategy, Creative, Interactive and Dev. There are about eight still active on this site – and it gets updated fairly regularly. We have a big cultural mix of people in here, heaps from the UK and quite a few from the US and Asia. It's one big melting pot and a lot of fun.

WD: What was the timescale for the project? How long was Amnesia given to produce the finished product, and at what stage did you start testing?

IM: The initial site took about ten weeks to build; since

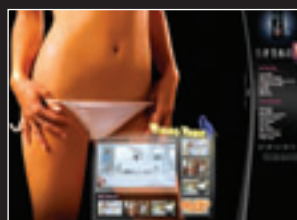
“Our strategy had revealed that all you really needed to show was a hot girl's body and a can of Lynx”



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09: Checking the photographs as they went was pivotal for ensuring they had the best shots for the designers to work with

10: Suddenly a really hot-looking camera person entered the studio to distract the guys from the rather scantily clad model



10

“The site is really just a shell waiting for content. Perfect for a fast-moving brand like Lynx”

then, we've just been adding in new girls/pages/ widgets as new campaigns come out. We have bursts of activity lasting around six weeks, and then we go back into planning for the next 'girl'.

WD: What kind of testing was done in terms of browser compatibility, and was the site tested across desktop and mobile platforms before the site went live?

IM: We test everything we humanly can on staging servers, then we keep testing after it goes live and after each update. Most of the browsers are solid for this kind of site. It's a tougher gig on mobile, so right now the content mobile is very thin compared to the main Flash site. We enter into these projects expecting issues to occur at some point – it makes life more bearable when you expect the worst.

WD: The site is obviously a promotion that runs in conjunction with other promotional material, ie TV adverts. What is the expected life cycle of the website, and what happens to the finished site when its life cycle is complete?

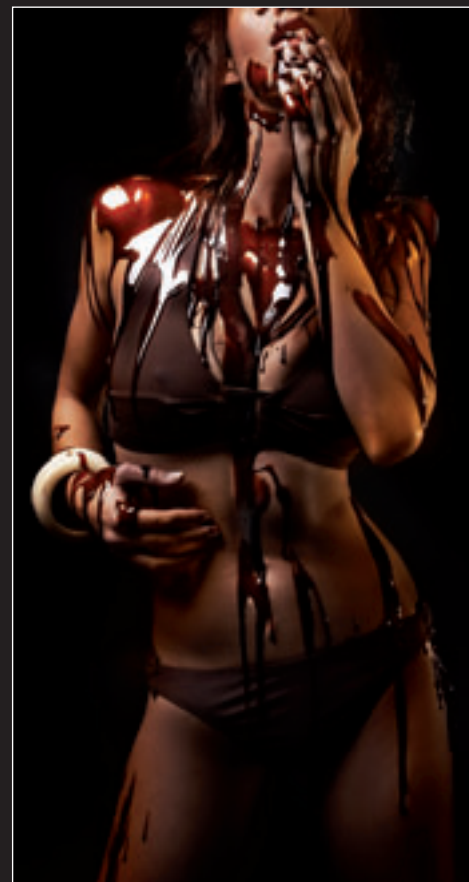
IM: We think the site has a minimum two-year life expectancy, but we'd like to keep it going if people

stay enthusiastic and the feedback is good. We've got loads of new girls already shot, ready to go into the site over the coming months. Personally, I'd love to see the Australian version go global... that would be the best result. The site has a very flexible framework, so we'll keep our fingers crossed.

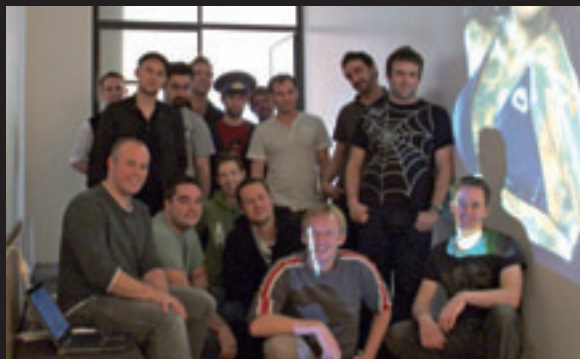
WD: Finally, what up-and-coming projects, obviously ones that you can talk about, does Amnesia have in the pipeline?

IM: We must be the luckiest agency in the world moving forward. Not only do we have amazing clients (and an office only a short drive from Bondi Beach), I think we have an unfair advantage being owned by one of the world's largest digital agencies (Avenue A | Razorfish... which is now owned by Microsoft), so we have access to some really cool technology long before our competitors. You can lay some pretty safe bets around the sort of projects that might lead us down the track. We are a creative bunch at heart, but we all possess the geek gene, so the future is pretty exciting right now.

See if you possess the Lynx Effect by visiting Amnesia's cheeky web creation at www.lynxeffect.com.au.



04



01

01: When it comes to working on projects like this one, it really is no surprise that the Amnesia team love what they do

02: The new England kit launch descends into farce when the sweatbands were deemed far too small and skimpy

03: We reckon we can just about guess what's about to happen here. Man holding watering can loses balance by 'accident'... allegedly



02



03



05

04: Some of the shots haven't even made it onto the site yet, like this totally exclusive image of a Lynx model covered in chocolate. Tasteful, huh?

05: All of a sudden a fortuitous gust of wind ripped through the studio, just as the photographer clicked his camera





Which next-gen browser?

We survey the latest versions of the web's hottest browser brands and identify features that will impact the way you work today and tomorrow

One of the problems the internet has always faced is also regarded as one of its biggest strengths. Nobody owns

it, and to a greater extent nobody has the authority to govern or dictate it – if such a notion was possible.

The framework it is built on is open and you don't need to have any kind of special licence to build content for it. What's more, the commercial forces that compete for online territory don't have to agree on how they operate. This has never been more unfortunate than within the browser market, where some of the world's biggest software companies struggle to become your favoured window onto the world wide web. All claim first and foremost to offer the best

viewing experience, with faster and more secure performance for demanding consumers – but what about the support for the developers building the content?

This is where things get more alarming. You see, the considerations for what goes on under the hood tend to be brushed under the carpet and discretely ignored. What then transpires is that web designers and coders suddenly make disgruntled noises about the lack of genuine CSS support, odd interpretations of the document object model (DOM), horrible little holes or glitches and God knows what else. Sadly, this strife isn't merely confined to the beta release phases of the new Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera, Safari et al, but instead becomes a characteristic that developers have to put up with. So why don't we just stop

whingeing and boycott the troublesome browsers until they take notice? Nice theory, but if your hated browser happens to have a decent market share of users, then alienating them with an unforgiving website could be fatal. Instead, we're forced to find workarounds that make things work across as many browsers and devices as possible – even Dreamweaver automatically adds code!

So seeing as we're checking out some of the new CSS3 tags this issue, we thought an overview of the features and specs for the current generation of browsers might be a useful idea. Primarily with developers in mind, we'll briefly describe the publicised merits of Internet Explorer 8, Firefox 3, Opera 9.5 and Safari 3, while looking at where they sit in regards to the popular Acid standards test.

INTERNET EXPLORER 7 & 8

As the world's leader can Microsoft show everyone the way with its latest browsers?

As the unmistakeable leader of the browser market, Microsoft's Internet Explorer would naturally bear the brunt of bad press. Popularity is a double-edged sword when it comes to aspects of security, a particular bone of contention for IE as attackers will always target the commonest denominator – but what about web standards? Sadly, Microsoft's ability to almost guarantee ubiquity by packaging the client with Windows hasn't seen it adopt the moral high ground when it comes to supporting established development rules either. For example, version 7 is known to support a mere 54 per cent of the CSS2.1 specification, which is some 40 per cent behind equivalent estimates for Firefox and Opera. As you'll

```
According to the conditional comment,
this is Internet Explorer 7
<![endif-->
```

Similarly, you will have noticed when coding script for multiple browsers that often referencing the page document object model can be tough. In simple terms, this often affects how JavaScript can interact with elements such as text boxes, images, forms, object arrays or whatever. Internet Explorer uses the Trident layout engine and therefore renders or builds pages differently, which then impacts on universal DOM rules. A typical hack here has been to code browser identity checks into scripts to use specific DOM calls where needed and



standards support. It took great pride in releasing the beta version to the public at its MIX developer conference in March, showing how webpages rendered exactly the same as its contemporaries – wow, finally! However, reception of the new version has been lukewarm to say the least, with doubts over commitments to fully support CSS2.1 and even more worries over support for CSS3. Only a few selectors are known to feature for the latter, although we should remember that the browser remains very much a work in progress. At the moment it can claim an Acid2 test pass, but does horribly on Acid3 despite all the other older clients gaining much higher scores.

Another point to bear in mind is our earlier one about catering for different versions of Explorer. The beta of version 8 lets users switch between 'standards mode' and an emulation of the quirky IE7 so that the enhancements don't effectively 'break the web'. However, there's also a provision made for developers who wish to declare or force the rendering engine that the new browser should use so as to get the intended result. This 'meta switching' idea is essentially a more robust and simpler way to hard code compatibility, and involves placing a line similar to the one below in the <head> of your document's page:

```
<meta http-equiv="X-UA-Compatible"
content="IE=8" />
```



Developers have been surprised and encouraged to see IE8 pass the Acid2 test

"Internet Explorer has contributed to a negative trend of code 'hacking' to overcome standards neglect"

see from our boxout, this is also reflected in the results of recent Acid tests and arguably the worst performance of Acid2 and Acid3 out of the bunch. What also seems evident is that different versions of IE don't tend to improve the level of web standards support from the one before, or are at least erratic in terms of the issues addressed. One of the things this means for developers is that they must code certain hacks into pages optimised for IE versions whereby the browser selects what code to run from a series of switch statements only it can read. These are known as conditional comments:

work around such inconsistencies. The example below shows how checking the browser name can be used to load an Internet Explorer optimised page instead of the normal Index:

```
<script language="JavaScript" t
ype="text/
JavaScript">
if(navigator.appName == "Microsoft
Internet Explorer")
{
    window.location =
"ExplorerIndex.html"
}
window.location == "Index.html"
</script>
```

The real message here is that Internet Explorer has contributed to a negative trend of code 'hacking' to overcome standards neglect. This creates a very disjointed approach and something not many web developers would advise, instead recommending better cross-browser testing of content and stripping back of the features that cause grief. Throw into the mix that Internet Explorer 8 will eschew many of the workarounds needed for version 7 and you've got even more of a balancing act to maintain!

VERSION 8 BETA

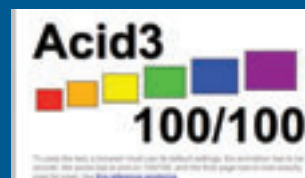
The good news is that early signs of Internet Explorer 8 suggested Microsoft was going back to the drawing board on

```
<p><!--[if IE]>
According to the conditional comment,
this is Internet Explorer
<![endif-->
<!--[if IE 4]>
According to the conditional comment,
this is Internet Explorer 4
<![endif-->
<!--[if IE 5.0]>
According to the conditional comment,
this is Internet Explorer 5.0
<![endif-->
<!--[if IE 5.5]>
According to the conditional comment,
this is Internet Explorer 5.5
<![endif-->
<!--[if IE 6]>
According to the conditional comment,
this is Internet Explorer 6
<![endif-->
<!--[if IE 7]>
```

ACID TESTING

We assess results from one of the most popular forms of browser testing

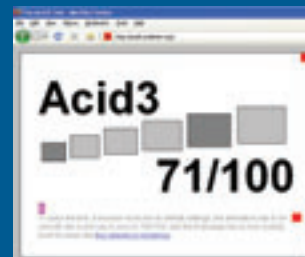
The Acid test was developed by The Web Standards Project to provide a very tangible and visual way to assess the compliancy of browser technology. Although it is openly published and available to all, the purpose is to aid in the assessment stages of development and give vendors a chance to evaluate their pending updates. You've probably heard product teams from Microsoft or Mozilla waxing lyrical about internal builds boasting 100 per cent scores on the most current Acid test – although do they really do all that well in reality? Using the latest and third version of the test, released in March this year, we thought we'd give it a shot and print the results. So by all means check out the reference image and compare with the grabs from Internet Explorer 8, Firefox 3, Opera 9 and Safari 3 to draw your own conclusions.



This is what the Acid3 test should look like in your chosen browser



Internet Explorer 8



Firefox 3



OPERA 9.5

Small but perfectly formed, this is one cult phenomenon that seems determined to bring high levels of standards support to the masses

Developed originally as a research project in 1994 at Norwegian telecommunications firm Telenor, Opera was first released as a browser to the public in 1996. Version 2.0, as it was christened then, only ran on Windows, although it was quickly ported for other devices and platforms in the following years. Mobile support has subsequently become a key part of what the browser represents commercially, with the Opera Mini version for mobile phones proving hugely popular alongside clients built especially for the Nintendo DS and Wii consoles.

With the desktop version now open to Mac and PC users, Opera boasts a meagre but devoted market share of approximately one per cent – although it remains highly regarded for being a trailblazer of new features and standards compliancy. In fact, previous iterations up

to version 9.5 have often had to include capabilities for improving the rendering of standards bereft websites, simply because Opera adheres to and supports them so strictly. It is credited as being one of the first to implement CSS and currently claims support for the following:

HTML 4.01, XHTML 1.1 (plus Basic, Mobile Profile, +Voice), HTML 5 (partial)
CSS2.1, CSS 3 (partial)
WML 2.0, XSLT, XPath, XSL-FO, ECMAScript 3 (JavaScript), DOM 2
XMLHttpRequest (see box out), HTTP 1.1
Unicode, SVG 1.1, GIF89a, JPEG and PNG (with alpha)

If you check out our Acid testing section of this feature, you'll spot that Opera 9.5 gets the best score of the bunch – despite only managing 83/100.

It's worth pointing out that the visual result is easily the most coherent of all four and that the Opera team claim to have nonstable development versions achieving maximum marks. Also from the list, you'll see that Opera has partial support for HTML 5, when in fact it is reported to lead the way with support for the new specification:

Canvas element
contentEditable
Cross-document messaging
Element.tabindex attribute and the Element, {blur, focus} methods
getElementsByName
Embed and Video
Navigator.onLine attribute and the Window, {online, offline} events
Server-sent events
Web Forms 2.0



Opera has always been known for innovating the browser GUI but it's no slouch at standards either

“With the desktop version now open to Mac and PC users, Opera boasts a meagre but devoted market share of approximately one per cent”

SAFARI 3.1

Apple's own OS X browser doesn't do much shouting when it comes to standards support – so what's it like and where's it going next?

Apple released Safari 3.1 in March with an updated rendering engine that boasted speed gains over already impressive performance times. In accordance with literature released at the time (<http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=307467>) it also added some next-generation standards support too, including basic animation effects with CSS transforms/transitions and the much touted <video> and <audio> tag elements expected in Firefox 3.1:

```
<video src=myMovie.mov autoplay>
</video> //example of HTML 5's video
tag
```

```
@font-face {
  font-family: JuicyFruit;
  src: url('JuicyFruit-Regular.ttf');
} //example of CSS3's @font-face
```

In addition to adding the @font-face CSS3 attribute (above) for facilitating custom typefaces regardless of system install, the browser has also implemented offline storage facilities for web application development. This HTML 5 addition could be big news for RIA builders and emulates the likes of Adobe AIR and Google Gears whereby caching of data allows for offline operation. We can't unfortunately find any evidence of this facility being demonstrated properly yet and it'll be a while before any of this stuff goes mainstream while waiting for the other browsers to catch up.

VERSION 4

There's not much concrete information about where Apple will take its browser

from the current version 3; however, speculation is rife. Here's a look at some of the key areas being talking about...

- JavaScript speeds gains of 53 per cent
- Set to appear in the forthcoming Snow Leopard update of OS X
- Ability to save webpages and launch them from the desktop. These site-specific browsers or SSBs are effectively UI-reduced clients that provide direct access to web apps
- Incorporation of various CSS-based graphic improvements, including gradients, masks and reflections



One of the big things Safari is hot on is the speed of how it runs JavaScript or HTML rendering



Web Devout – the ultimate guide

For those who don't know, Web Devout is a site compiled by David Hammond, a developer and web standards expert from California. What it essentially does is enable visitors to view vast lists and tables describing the varying levels of support for current web standards across the leading browsers. Rather than re-creating or printing these vast check lists, we'd advise you take a look – an invaluable resource when trying to establish what to expect from each browser.



This is a great site for making instant comparisons across the latest browser types

DOM support: www.webdevout.net/browser-support

CSS3 support: www.webdevout.net/browser-support-css#css3standards

FIREFOX 3

As the main contender to the browser crown does Firefox look so rosy to web developers?

With a reputed user base of just under 20 per cent worldwide, Firefox is the most popular browser after Microsoft Internet Explorer 8. A product of the Mozilla Corporation and available freely under an open-source licence, it started out as a client known as Phoenix in 2002 and was only released under the Firefox moniker in 2004. Recent versions, including the latest third, have largely been characterised by tabbed browsing, the ability to install extensions that add additional functionality and a well-publicised edge over Internet Explorer when it comes to security.

In terms of standards compliance and page rendering, Firefox uses the Gecko layout engine to implement current specifications and pre-empt those likely to be introduced at a later date. Mozilla actually does a great job of informing

developers of new nightly builds and bug fixes on its Bugzilla forum (<https://bugzilla.mozilla.org>), where notifications on new developments for future versions are also posted.

As far as the current version goes, it manages a 71/100 in Acid3 and boasts a number of new features or additions of interest to developers:

HTML 4 - <script> tag must have a closing </script> tag
JavaScript 1.8 - Script object made obsolete and no longer supported
Microformats - global Microformats object added for accessing API
HTML 5 - drag, dragend (events) and activeElement, hasFocus (DOM attributes)
DOM - 12 new methods added
SVG 1.1 - All filters supported and foreignObject, pattern, mask (elements)
Animated PNG (APNG) image format

Check out: http://developer.mozilla.org/en/docs/Firefox_3_for_developers

CODENAME 'SHIRETOKO'

This is the codename for Firefox 3.1 and various new enhancements that should be of great interest to web developers are being talked about. A posting on Wikipedia claims that support for HTML



5's <video> tag is to be implemented, which will allow video objects to be defined and operated within the page much like images - with src, width, height properties, etc. Ajax and Web 2.0 fans will be interested to hear that cross-site XMLHttpRequest capabilities are planned for the release, which will have huge benefits in building complex web apps and simplifying mashup work. Based on the Gecko 1.9.1 engine, it is also widely anticipated that Firefox 3.1 will have full CSS3 selector support, having had preAlpha builds pass a number of homebrew tests (www.css3.info/selectors-test/test.html) with flying colours. Expect to find these additions:

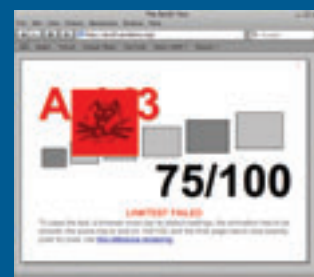
text-shadow (www.css3.info/preview/text-shadow/)
Media Queries (www.w3.org/TR/css3-mediaqueries/)
font-stretch, word-wrap (www.w3.org/TR/css3-fonts/)
@font-face (www.w3.org/TR/css3-webfonts/#font-descriptions)



The www.css3.info site has loads of great previews of the brand new tags in action



Opera 9



Safari 3

The latest Acid3 test is intended to simulate demands on browsers from Web 2.0 dynamic applications, and includes checks on the following specifications:

DOM2 Core, DOM2 Events, DOM2 HTML, DOM2 Range
DOM2 Style (getComputedStyle, etc...),
DOM2 Traversal (NodeIterator, TreeWalker)
DOM2 Views (defaultView)
ECMAScript
HTML4 (<object>, <iframe>, etc)
HTTP (Content-Type, 404, etc)
Media Queries
Selectors (:lang, :nth-child(), combinators, dynamic changes, etc...)
XHTML 1.0
CSS2 (@font-face), CSS2.1 ('inline-block', 'pre-wrap', parsing...)
CSS3 Color (rgba(), hsla(), ...),
CSS3 UI ('cursor')
data: URIs
SVG (SVG Animation, SVG Fonts, etc...)

We should point out that this list isn't exhaustive and browsers may in fact have implementations that aren't evaluated in this version of the test.

Find out more information by visiting The Web Standards Project at www.webstandards.org

"Acid tests should not be a sole barometer of how good the browser is"

XMLHttpRequest

Known as the cornerstone of Ajax development for its ability to make asynchronous server requests, it is in fact an API first developed by Microsoft for Outlook Web Access 2000 - known as XMLHttpRequest. However, the first native browser object implementations of XMLHttpRequest began with Mozilla 1.0 in 2002 and quickly were adopted by subsequent vendors, with ongoing developments of the standard today.

A winner would be nice...

So what conclusions can we draw from this browser round-up, and where does it leave them all in respect to how they perform? Well, first we should stress that judging them on the Acid tests should not be a sole barometer of how good the browser is from a developer's perspective. This is merely a well-known benchmark in the same way that speed tests are used to measure page loading times or JavaScript parsing - the results don't really mean all that much in practice. Until one of them can boast 100 per cent performance on standards and page rendering, the rest will never be pressured into following suit.

What's more, can such brilliance ever be attained when the specifications and rules that define the many technologies we use are always evolving? Couple that with the fact that browser vendors are usually only motivated by achieving a download ubiquity, which is mainly driven by end users. Unfortunately, they are an audience who largely don't

know whether bad performance is down to a site's design or the browser they use - and let's face it, rarely are they disgruntled enough to investigate it.

For the developers, we have to admit that the inconsistencies between the latest crop of web browsers are as evident as ever, but hopefully everyone can take heart that work is being done to bring them together. In a climate where the genetics of online design is changing, it seems likely that necessary advances and cross-platform implementations of HTML 5, CSS3 and Ajax will be influential in releases to come. There is evidence that while each browser still has work to do, each one seems keen to improve.

If you have got any news or opinions on the latest browsers, development issues you've spotted or rumours on forthcoming versions, then email the Web Designer team at webdesigner@imagine-publishing.co.uk or share your thoughts on our forum at www.webdesignermag.co.uk

PLAYFOOL / VIDEO

Tue Jul 22 17:26:45 GMT+0100 2008

SELECT A MENU OPTION BY SELECTING
THE LETTER ON THE KEYBOARD

[H] - HOME
[A] - ABOUT
[N] - NEWS
[V] - VIDEO ■
[C] - CONTACT

CONTROLS

[P] - PAUSE
[R] - RESUME
[S] - RESTART



THE BRIEF

ON THE CD

Tutorial files:
mySite.fla,
video.flv

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE

Design a retro interface using Flash
CS3 and ActionScript 3.0

TIME REQUIRED

Two hours

SKILL LEVEL



Build a retro-styled GUI with keyboard controls

DARREN RICHARDSON TEACHES US HOW TO CREATE A RETRO MICROSITE THAT USES KEY-BASED COMMANDS TO NAVIGATE

IF YOU STARTED computing way back in the late Eighties/early Nineties before Windows was mainstream like I did, you would have more than likely been programming on a UNIX or even a VAX interface. This tutorial brings back a lot of memories of my first computing job where I was a database programmer working on a VAX using key commands – in those days, there wasn't a mouse to be seen throughout the studio. So we are going way back to when Acid House hit the

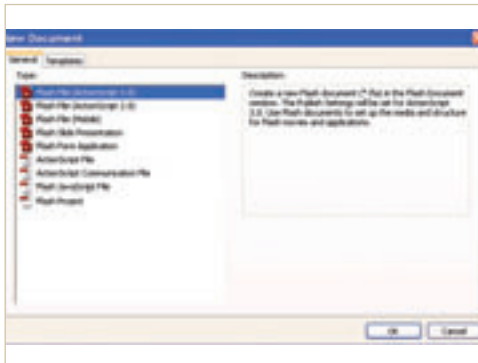
music scene and Margaret Thatcher introduced the poll tax in order to give you young upstarts a look at what we used to work with. This tutorial will show you how to implement a keyboard-controlled interface and also control video as well, which you weren't able to do way back in 1989. The ActionScript will actually be timeline-based because this is not a code-heavy tutorial. Right, let's get started before I actually start getting depressed about how old I am.



YOUR EXPERT

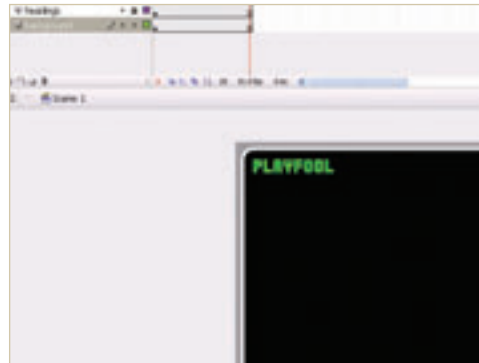
Darren Richardson works as technical director at de-construct. In his spare time he runs the Flash resource www.actionscripts.co.uk, as well as getting involved in many other portal sites as a moderator. Catch more from Darren at www.playpool.com.

Build a retro-styled GUI with keyboard controls



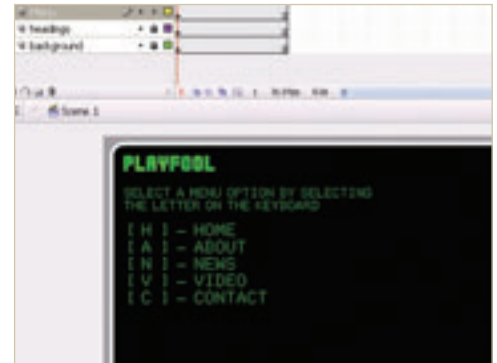
01 Set the stage

Open Flash CS3 and create a new Flash File (ActionScript 3.0). Save the Flash document as 'mySite fla' into its own folder as you will be adding some more assets to it later. Open up the Properties window and set the stage size to 650 x 600px with a background colour of black (#000000).



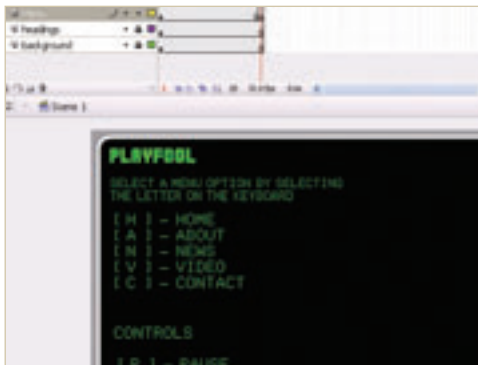
02 Add a heading

Create a new layer and call it 'heading'. Select a retro font from one of the cover CDs on an old issue of *Web Designer* – if you're a regular reader, you should have a great free font library. Create your heading like the above one, placing it on the top left of the screen.



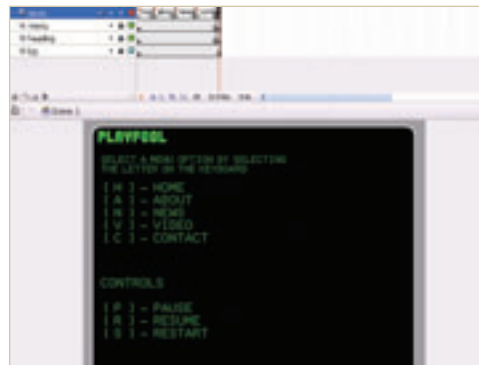
03 Menu instructions

It's all well and good having keyboard-controlled navigation, but it needs to know which keys trigger the move to a new section. Create a new layer and call it 'Menu', again using a retro font and a Static text field. Add an instructional line then the information for the controls.



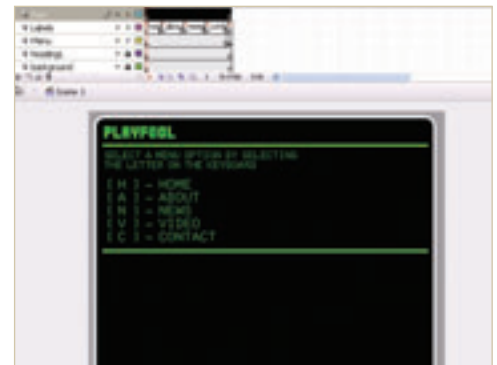
04 Keyframes are key

Make sure you extend the frames to frame 20 on the Menu layer by pressing F5. Now select frame 20 and press F6. You are creating a Keyframe so you can keep the existing frame state but add or delete content from it. Next, add a new Static text field with the additional menu instructions.



05 Labels layer

Create a layer called 'Labels' and extend the frames to 20. Every five frames, add a Keyframe. Add the labels on these Keyframes by selecting one and placing the label in the Property Inspector. Call frame 1 'home', frame 5 'about', frame 10 'news', frame 15 'contact' and frame 20 'video'.



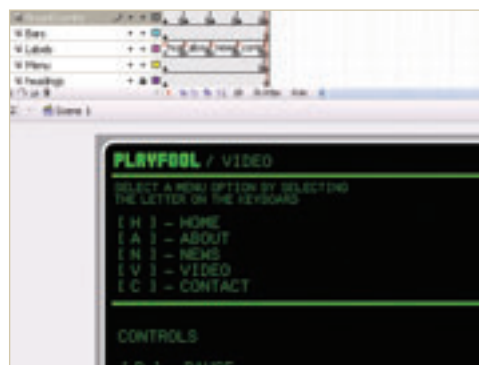
06 Dividing bars

To separate the menu from the content and heading, we want two bars like a UNIX or VAX screen. Create a layer called 'Bars'. Draw a rectangle across the screen, with a width of 5px and a length of 595px. Copy this and place above and under the info. Extend the frames to frame 20.



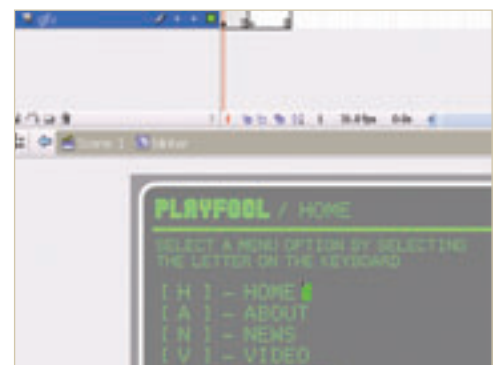
07 Breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs are actually used to do a couple of things, one being to inform the user where they are in the site structure, and the other to make it easy to navigate back a level. As we only have one level, we will be using them as an information aid only. Above are some examples.



08 More crumbs

Create a layer called 'BreadCrumbs'. Extend the frames to 20, every five adding a Keyframe. Using F6, select frame one and add a new Static text field, then enter the text 'Home'. Place the text field next to the heading and repeat for the other sections (about, news, contact and video).



09 Blinker cursor

The blinker is the cursor that says where you are on a UNIX/VAX screen. Create a layer called 'Blinker', then create a small rectangle (10px width, 20px height). Select and make it into a Movie Clip. Call it 'blinker', open and extend the frames to 5, then create five more empty frames.

TECHNIQUE

Three retro sites as examples

We have listed here three different websites that use a retro technique or have a retro feel - it's very 'in' you know!



01 The Raconteurs

The Raconteurs' site was the inspiration for this tutorial. Mark the editor is a big fan, so we decided to re-create the site with a twist by adding video content. www.theraconteurs.com/site.html



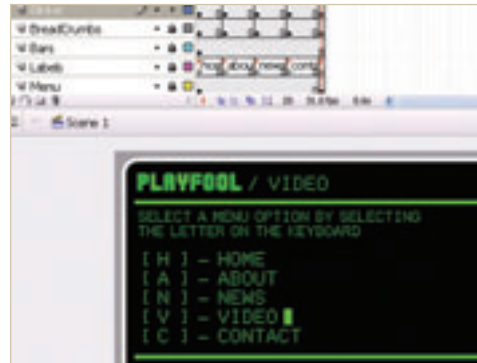
02 Feta

Although the actual design of this inspirational website is modern, it has linked modern design with a retro navigation metaphor. To navigate through its content, you use your arrow keys to browse, select and go back. www.feta.pl



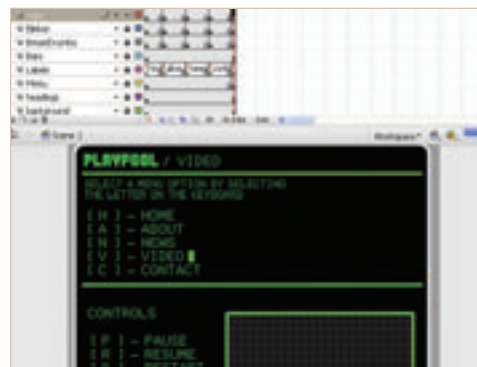
03 Group 94

Group 94 brings a retro feel to its website, but then it uses the latest technology to help bring it alive by linking in with a CMS and enabling the user to play with the content and copy while online. Check it out yourself at www.group94.com



10 Blinking place

Back in the main timeline, select the Blinker layer, extend it to 20 frames and then add a Keyframe every five frames as you have done before. On each Keyframe, add the new blinker Movie Clip next to the corresponding section, eg, on frame 20, place it next to the video menu option.



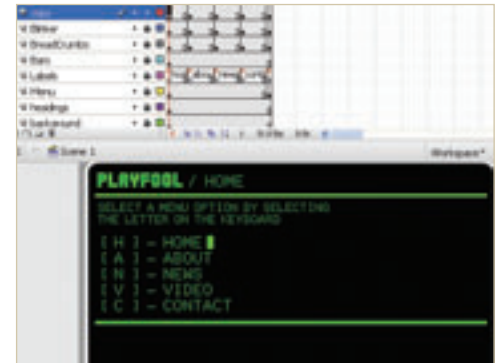
12 More copy

On frames 10 and 15, add more copy relating to news and your contact info. On frame 20, you will be adding a box to hold your video player. Select the Rectangle tool and make the stroke bright green (0x00FF00). Give the rectangle size a height of 325, width of 245 and x: 277, y: 305.

14 Listening out

Now you need to create a mechanism for your Flash movie to listen when you hit the keyboard. To do this, add an Event Listener to the stage, which listens for the keyboard event KEY_DOWN, which calls a function when triggered. Create the function keyDownHandler and remember to parse in the event as a parameter.

```
stage.addEventListener(KeyboardEvent.KEY_DOWN,
keyDownHandler);
function keyDownHandler(event:KeyboardEvent):void {
```



11 Copy writing

Create a new layer and call it 'copy'. Extend the layer to 20 frames and break it up with Keyframes every five frames. On the first Keyframe, add a logo of your choice like above, then add some copy in the about section on Keyframe 5. Add this content under the bar you created earlier.

13 Setting the focus

Create a new layer and call it 'code'. Extend the frames to 20 and separate by placing a Keyframe every five frames. Open the Actions panel and in frames 5, 10 and 15, add a stop(); command. Then select frame one and add the code below. Import the events package and set the focus to the main Movie Clip, which is, in fact, the stage.

```
import flash.events.*;
// set the focus to the stage
stage.focus = this;
```

15 Switch me

Using the parameter that was parsed into the function in the last step, parse the events keycode into a switch statement. Place a case clause to trap each time the V key is pressed, which is keycode 86. Call a function called setVideoDisplay, parsing in the Boolean true, and tell the timeline to go to and stop at the label 'video'. Then break out of the switch statement.

```
switch (event.keyCode) {
case 86 :// v = video
setVideoDisplay(true);
gotoAndStop("video");
break;
```

16 Video controls

Inside the case clause for 80, pause the NetStream object, which you will be creating shortly, and break from the switch statement. In the case clause for 83, restart the video by seeking the start position and then resuming and break. Last of all, in the clause for 82, use the NetStream to resume the video and then break.

```
case 80 : //pause [p]
    ns.pause();
    break;
case 83 :
    ns.seek(0); // restart [s]
    ns.resume();
    break;
case 82 : // resume [r]
    ns.resume();
    break;
```

17 Site sections

The case clauses above will navigate to the other sections of the website by using the timeline and go to and stop statements, like you did in a previous step. You also have to call the function setVideoDisplay and parse in false. The last case clause is to trap any other key that is pressed that isn't in the list.

```
case 65 : // a = about
    setVideoDisplay(false);
    gotoAndStop("about");
    break;
case 78 : // n = news
    setVideoDisplay(false);
    gotoAndStop("news");
    break;
case 67 : // c = contact
    setVideoDisplay(false);
    gotoAndStop("contact");
    break;
case 72 : // h = home
    setVideoDisplay(false);
    gotoAndStop("home");
    break;
default :
    trace("Not selected = " + event.keyCode);
}
```

18 NetConnection

Now you have finished setting up your keyboard key-press listeners, you now need to create a new NetConnection using the new statement. You then have to set the connect to null so it will be ready to use with a new NetStream.

```
// Set net connection
var nc:NetConnection = new NetConnection();
nc.connect(null);
```

IN DETAIL

Creating a retro preloader

Add a retro loading bar that adds a finishing touch to the completed interface

FIRST OF ALL, add a new scene by selecting Window>Other Panels>Scene. Add a new scene and drag it to the top of the list. Name it 'loader' and rename Scene 1 to 'Main'. Select Scene 1 and you will see a clean stage. Rename the first layer 'code' and add the code below.

```
// Add events to the loading of the Movie Clip
this.loaderInfo.addEventListener(Event.COMPLETE,
onComplete);
this.loaderInfo.addEventListener(ProgressEvent.
PROGRESS, showProgress);

// make the loading bar 0 width.
loading_mc.loadingBar.scaleX = 0;

function showProgress(e:ProgressEvent):void {
    // calc the percent loaded
    var perLoaded:Number = (e.bytesLoaded /
e.bytesTotal);

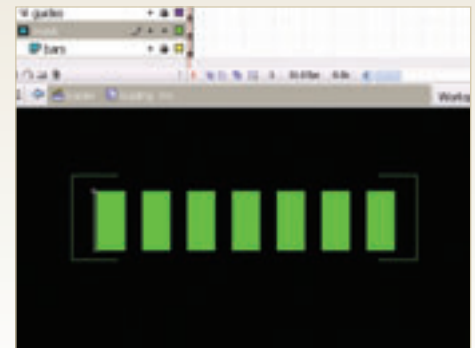
    // set the bar to the correct length and the
digital display.
    loading_mc.loadingBar.scaleX =
perLoaded;
    loaded_txt.text = String(perLoaded);
}

function onComplete(event:Event):void {
    // fully loaded to continue to the next scene.
    play();
}

stop();
```

Then create a new layer called 'assets', add a Dynamic text field to the stage and call the instance name 'loaded_txt' in the Property Inspector. Next, draw a rectangle that is 20px high and 100px wide. Select the rectangle and make it a Movie Clip. Call it 'loading_mc', using the same name in the instance field of the Property Inspector. Open the 'loading_mc', select the bar again and make it a Movie Clip, this time calling it 'loadingBar' and again making sure it has the same name in the instance field of the Property Inspector. This will act as your mask. Place the loading bar at 0px on the X and Y positions. Create another layer under the mask layer and draw seven bars that will all fit under the loadingBar. Now select the mask layer, right-click and select mask. Last of all, add some guides, create a new layer and call it 'guides'. Draw a square and cut it in half, then put half either side of the loadingBar.

Next up, navigate back to the main stage and with the loader scene selected, it's time to test your movie. To see the loading bar in action, go to the menu and select View>Simulate Download.



Inside the loading_mc clip, showing the three layers and the all-important mask

19 NetStream

Next, create a new NetStream by parsing in the newly created NetConnection as a parameter. Add an Event Listener to the NetStream to listen for ASYNC_ERROR, which – if triggered – calls a function called asyncErrorHandler. Now create the function asyncErrorHandler and remember to parse in the AsyncErrorEvent as a parameter.

```
var ns:NetStream = new NetStream(nc);
ns.addEventListener(AsyncErrorEvent.ASYNC_ERROR,
asyncErrorHandler);
function asyncErrorHandler(event:AsyncErrorEvent):
void {
    // ignore error
}
```

20 Video code

Create a new video object and then using the method attachNetStream, parse in the NetStream object you just created. Add the video to the stage using the addChild method, call the function setVideoDisplay, parsing false and set the NetStream to pause. Last of all, place the video on the stage.

```
// create new video
var vid:Video = new Video();
vid.attachNetStream(ns);
addChild(vid);
setVideoDisplay(false);
ns.pause();
vid.x = 280;
vid.y = 310;
```


21 The function

You have called this function quite a bit now, so it's time to create it. Parse in a Boolean as a parameter and then set the NetStream to seek 0, which is the beginning of the video playhead. Set the video's visible property to the input parameter and then do an if statement on the input parameter. If it is equal to false, pause the NetStream.

```
function setVideoDisplay(b:Boolean):void{
    ns.seek(0)
    vid.visible = b;
    if (b == false )
    {
        ns.pause();
    }
}
```

22 What day is it?

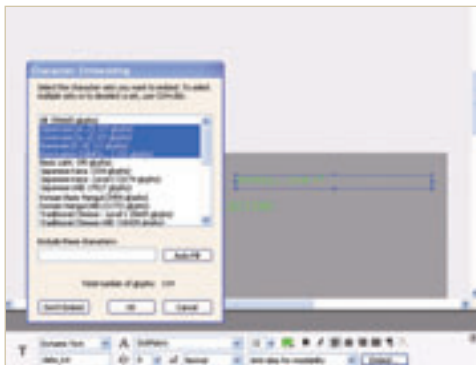
Just in case you think your website visitors don't know the time or date, you can add one. Create a new date object and assign a text field, which you will be creating shortly in the date object string. To do this, you have to cast the date object using the toString method. Last of all, add a stop on this frame.

```
// set the date
var d:Date = new Date();
date_txt.text = d.toString();
stop();
```

23 Frame 20

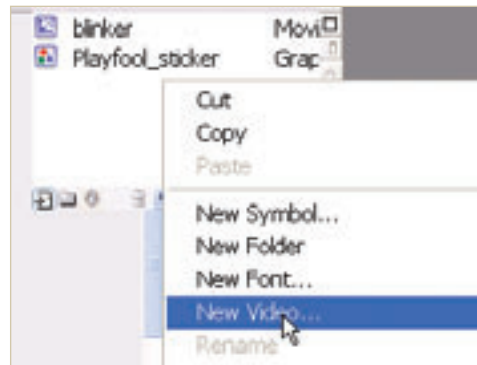
Select frame 20 on the timeline and open the Actions panel. Here, you will tell the NetStream to play the video file, which should be placed in the same directory as the FLA and SWF files. Set the video visible property to false and stop the frames from looping with the stop command.

```
ns.play("video.flv");
vid.visible = true;
stop();
```



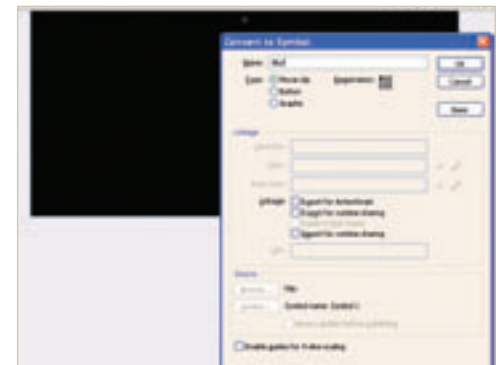
24 Date display

Create a new layer and call it 'date'. Add a Dynamic text field to the top right of the screen, embed your retro font, select Uppercase, Lowercase, Numerals and Punctuation and press OK. Add your text field name to the instance name field in the Properties panel to equal 'date_txt'.



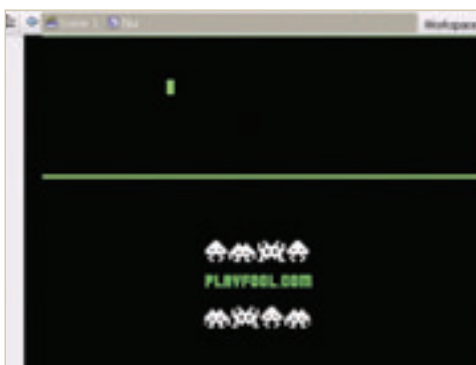
25 Add the video

If you tested your movie now, first of all no keystrokes would be captured and second of all, no video would play because you haven't got a video instance in your library. In the Library panel, right-click and select the New Video option. Call the video instance 'Video'.



26 Flicker effects

To make this look pretty realistic, add some screen flickers. Add a new layer called 'flicker', draw a rectangle and make it the same size as the stage (650 x 600px). Place it at 0px on the X and Y positions. Select the rectangle and make it a Movie Clip symbol. Call the Movie Clip 'Blur'.



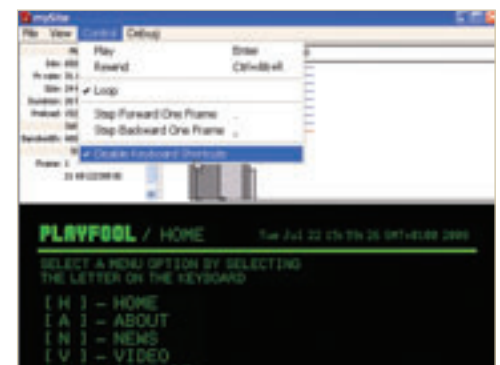
27 Screen flicker

Open the Blur Movie Clip and select the rectangle, making this another Movie Clip called 'BlurClip'. Select this and set the colour to Alpha at 0 per cent. Add a Keyframe at frame 40, select frame 40 and set the Alpha to equal 50 per cent. In the main timeline, extend the flicker layer to 20 frames.



28 Scan lines

Add a new layer called 'scanlines', select frame 20 and add a Keyframe. Inside the video frame, draw a line. Select this and make it a Movie Clip called 'scanLines'. Inside the clip, create four layers and add lines randomly on each layer. In the main timeline, set the Movie Clip Alpha to 40 per cent.



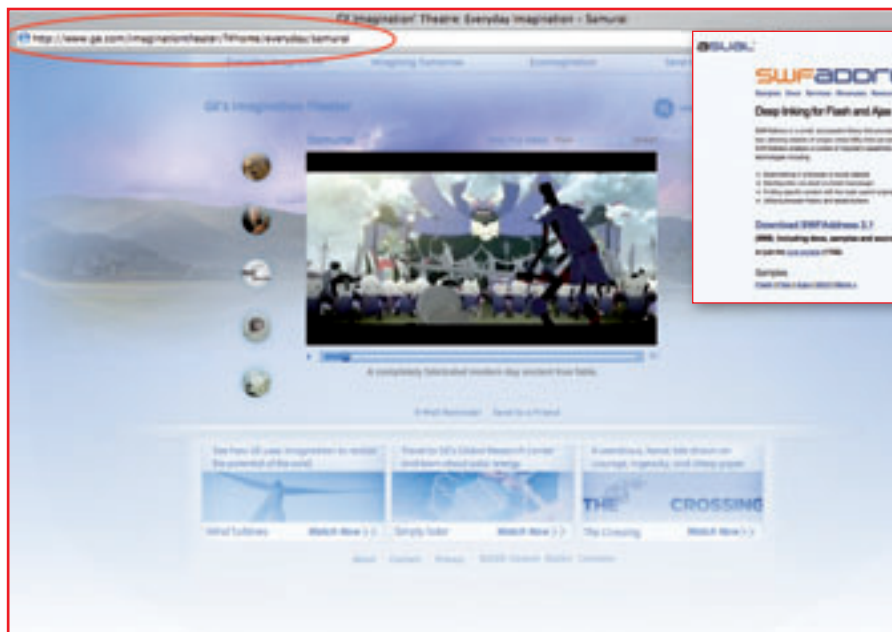
29 Test the result

All that's left is to test your movie before publishing to the internet, so run your file. You might notice that when you press the menu keys, nothing is happening. To test locally, you have to disable keyboard short cuts using the Control menu option. Now you're ready to publish to the internet.



Creative Blog >> Flash

Technique / Flash / Back and forth



SWFAddress the important issues to do with deep-linking

IF YOU'RE A heavy Flash content producer, you've probably been a little dismayed more than once to find it difficult to bookmark specific content within a site. While we all enjoy creating funky Flash websites, we probably all looked on longingly at HTML counterparts and wished for the ease of being able to deep-link into a website. While all of that might be about to change, the brainy boffins over at Asual (www.asual.com/swfaddress) have developed a

system for deep-linking into sites created with Flash. The system that Asual has created is called SWFAddress, and it allows for backwards and forward navigation using the browser, bookmarking and deep-linking. It uses the command ExternalInterface from within Flash, which links to a JavaScript class. While all of this sounds very complicated, the end user need not know exactly how it all works as there is AS1, AS2 and AS3 Class versions available, prewritten to get you going.

If you want to see this in action, SWFAddress has recently been put into practice by the interactive advertising agency Blitz, which used it on its Imagination Theatre website at www.ge.com/imaginationtheatre.

DOWNLOAD LIST

Flash-related downloads to make your designs more effective and creative

Code Snippets panel

<http://theflashblog.com/?cat=33>

The Code Snippets panel is probably one of the greatest additions to the Flash authoring environment. You can set up all sorts of short cuts, including skeleton document classes.

Exploding particles

<http://tinyurl.com/6lobyj>

We're always looking to add a little pizzazz into our sites, and if you've ever wanted an image to break up into hundreds of tiny particles and dance around your screen, then head to this site.

Class building

<http://tinyurl.com/6pyorv>

If you code classes but always forget the order of things, then you should consider Reyco1's great Class Builder panel. It downloads as an MXP file, so it just installs through the extension manager.

Multiple file uploader

<http://tinyurl.com/Seoxof>

If you are building a CMS or a client needs to upload multiple files to a web server, this handy utility with built-in Flash can give you just the functionality you need.

BE INSPIRED



ALL IN THE MIX

www.digimix.com

Over the years, there have been many applications that try to mix audio in Flash, but none have ever allowed you to save that audio – until now, that is. Thankfully, the Digimix Alpha is about to change all that. This is a fully fledged audio mixer that uses Flash's Byte Class Array to apply real-time effects and mixes them down to save just like a traditional desktop audio editor. This is the most powerful, jaw-dropping piece of Flash work that you're likely to see all year, so to help it reach these levels, feel free to send Digimix any advice, comments or suggestions you may have to alpha@digimix.com after checking out the website in its current alpha stage at www.digimix.com/alpha.



YOUR EXPERT

Mark Shufflebottom teaches on the BA and MA Interactive Media courses at Bournemouth University. He teaches 3D applications, interface design, online gaming, small-screen device production and, of course, all things Flash and ActionScript.

Creative Blog

Mixing and mashing the latest in design

NEWS FEED

KING OF ORIGAMI

Most of the cutting-edge Flash websites are now built with Papervision 3D, and its blog (<http://blog.papervision3d.org>) is launching PaperKing3D. This is an anything-goes competition to see who can build the best open source Flash project using the Papervision 3D engine. Take a look now!

NEWS FEED

GORGEOUS GALLERIES

Web designers are always on the lookout for new ways to display image galleries. There are many plug-ins for Flash that you'll have to splash out for, but not if you head over to www.fotoviewer.com where you'll find free Flash-based image galleries, which will link up with your Flickr images.

BOOK OF THE MONTH



Creating Mashups With Adobe Flex & AIR

www.friendsofed.com

We've covered creating mashups, Flex development and AIR in the magazine, but here is the lowdown on how to create it all together. Friends of Ed is a notorious publisher of excellent learning resources, and it has tapped into a topical arena to bring you all the latest coding goodness.

PLUG-IN OF THE MONTH



CALL IN THE SWITCHBOARD

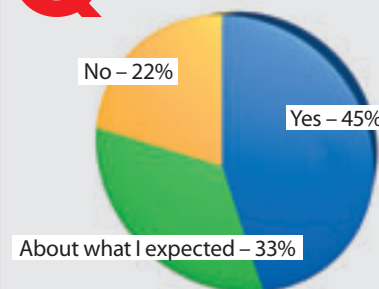
<http://labs.adobe.com/wiki/index.php/SwitchBoard>

Adobe has just released a new plug-in for Flex. SwitchBoard allows you access to drive any Adobe product from your AIR application, so you could author a tool to push colour schemes, images or assets between apps, depending on what you need.

WHAT YOU SAID ON THE FORUM



Has learning the transition to ActionScript 3.0 been much tougher than you originally thought?



THIS ISSUE

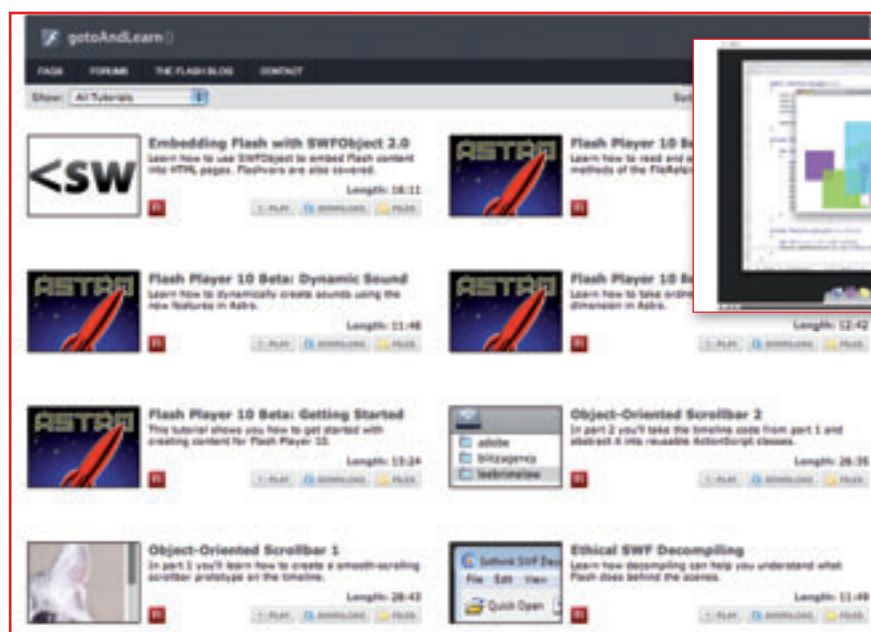


Are you likely to develop your SWF web content with the Flex authoring environment over Flash?

- i) Have done already ii) Plan to iii) No plans
iv) Use them together

Vote now by visiting the Web Designer forum at www.webdesignermag.co.uk/forum

Technique / Flash / Astro



Be prepared for Flash Player 10 by following tutorials now

BY NOW, YOU may be aware that Adobe has released the beta version of Flash Player 10, code-named Astro. There are many impressive new features, such as native support for a z axis, which will take the hassle out of trying to make things zoom in and out as if in 3D. While this isn't a fully fledged 3D engine like Papervision, it still has very exciting possibilities that will become second nature to most Flash designers

when it is released. Other welcome additions include hardware acceleration for bitmap images, which means the graphics card will take the strain instead of the Flash plug-in.

With all these great new features, you may not be able to wait for Flash CS4 to come out. Thankfully, Lee Brimelow, Adobe's Platform Evangelist of Flash, has created some new video tutorials over at his website, www.gotoandlearn.com. To be able to author to Flash 10 takes quite a lot of setting up, which is something that still won't put off the die-hard Flash authors, but even if you don't want to go to all that trouble then you will still find the tutorials very useful for giving a glimpse into what you may be doing this time next year. There's no harm in being prepared!



Steampunk

Noun

A genre of science fiction set in Victorian times when steam was the main source of machine power; also written steam-punk.

THE BRIEF

ON THE CD

Tutorial files:
All the files you will need are on this issue's disc

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE

To help you create a steampunk style for your website using Photoshop

TIME REQUIRED


Four hours

SKILL LEVEL



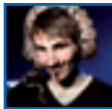
Create steampunk-style pages or backgrounds

HARNESS THE POWER OF PHOTOSHOP'S BASIC TOOLS TO CREATE A RICH AND FANTASTICAL STEAMPUNK-STYLE WEBSITE DESIGN

 **STEAMPUNK IS A** subgenre of fantasy and science fiction, which has been realised in book (*The Difference Engine*, *The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen*), film (*Wild Wild West*, *Back To The Future Part III*) and videogames (*Crimson Skies*, *Skies Of Arcadia*, *Syberia*), and has even inspired artists and engineers to create steampunk-inspired pseudo-Victorian works.

Here we set out to capture the magic of steampunk by creating a rich and textured graphic style using various steam-driven and mechanical objects such as piston engines,

pipings, clocks and meter faces. You'll learn how to engineer a Victorian-inspired interface and generate your own steam from the comfort of your computer chair. Using Photoshop's basic tools in creative ways, it is possible to bring that dream to the screen without having to know the software inside out. We'll take you through such tools and techniques as applying effective gradients, blending modes, basic drawing, the Smudge tool, the Warp tool and others that won't cause your cerebral cortex to implode.



YOUR EXPERT

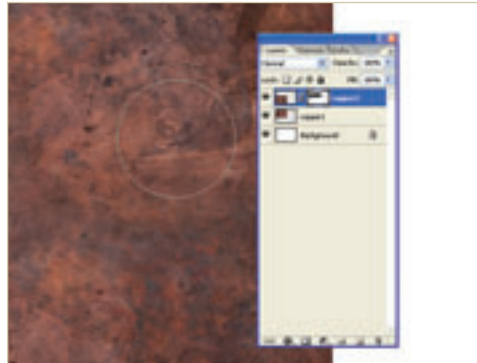
James Davies is currently working as a freelance illustrator (jameszilla.co.uk) alongside his work with Dirty Velvet (dirtyvelvet.co.uk). James has over a decade of Photoshop experience and has written tutorials for *Advanced Photoshop* and *Photoshop Creative*.

Create steampunk-style pages or backgrounds



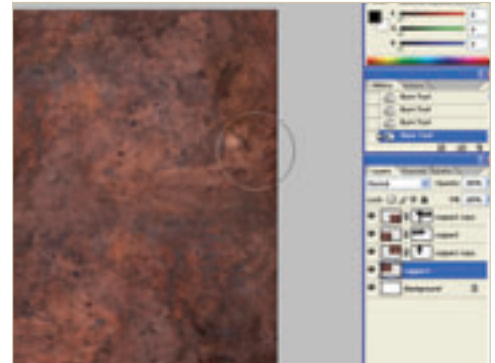
01 Old rusty

This rough copper from www.dreamstime.com is ideal for us. The texture is too detailed so we want to shrink it down, however, now we've got a texture that doesn't fill our workspace. To extend it, duplicate the layer and with the new layer selected, go to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All.



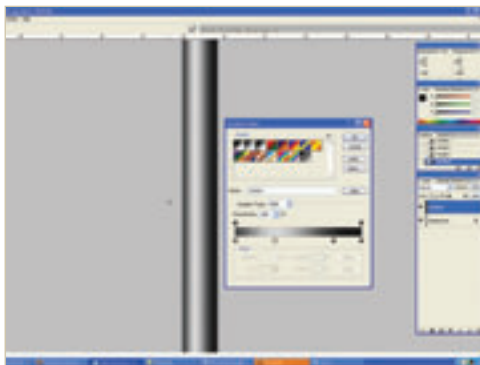
02 Layer Masks

Select the Brush tool (B) and employ a big soft-edged brush. Reduce the brush Opacity to about 25 per cent and with the Layer Mask icon selected on your Layers palette, begin to paint black onto the Layer Mask over the intersecting hard edges of the copper texture.



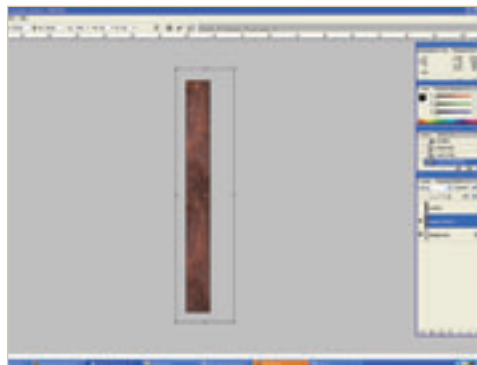
03 Stitching it together

Drag a copy of both your copper layers and repeat the process until you have a full page of texture. It's a good idea to flip the copied layers so that they're not uniform – go to Edit>Transform>Flip Horizontal or Flip Vertical to achieve this.



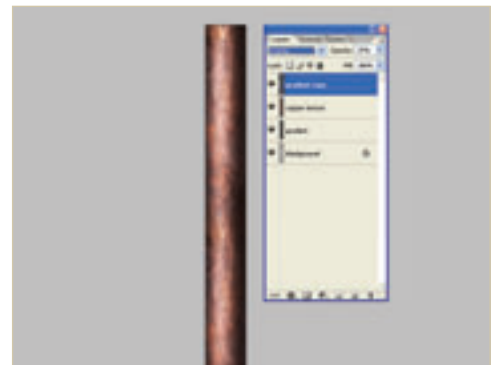
04 Gradients

Create a new document at 1,000 pixels in height by 100 in width. Make a new layer above the background and select the Gradient tool from the Tools palette. Create a dark grey to very light grey to medium grey as in the screenshot. When drawing, hold Shift and draw horizontally.



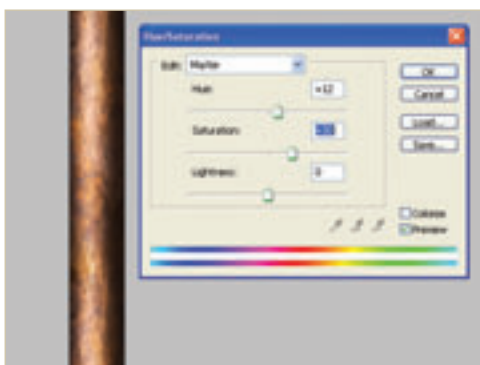
05 Adding texture

Import the copper texture onto your gradient file. Place it over your gradient on the layer hierarchy and use the Free Transform tool (Ctrl+T) to rotate it 90 degrees, then resize it to fit the canvas, squashing the width down a further half of its size.



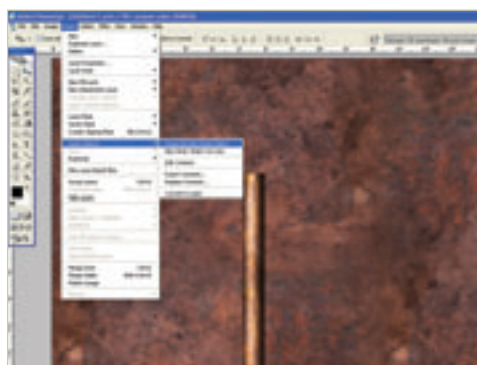
06 Shading

Duplicate the gradient layer and sandwich the copper texture layer. Set the layer blending mode of the copper layer to Hard Light. Set the top gradient layer blending mode to Overlay and reduce the layer Opacity to around 40 per cent.



07 Colour change

Reduce the bottom gradient layer Opacity to about 80 per cent. Just experiment until you get a good tonal balance and then go to Layer>Flatten Image. Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation to tweak the colours so they differ slightly from our background texture.



08 Smart Objects

Import the copper pipe onto your texture base and with the copper pipe layer selected, go to Layer>Smart Objects>Group Into Smart Object. This will allow us to resize and duplicate and resize all duplicates without destroying the pixel information.



09 Drag and drop

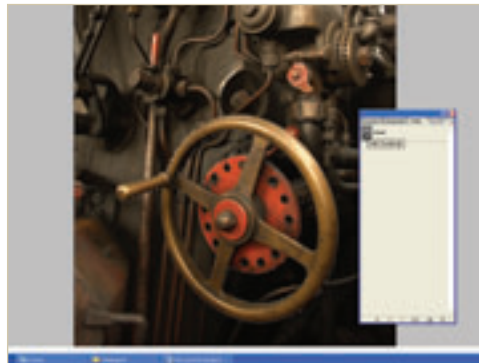
Roughly mark out the boundaries of your navigation by using the pipes to act as guides. With the copper layer selected, you can drag copies using the Move tool (V) by holding the Alt key down and dragging it around the canvas where appropriate.

Tutorial



10 Bells and whistles

Build up elements such as valves and gauges to give a sense of steam-powered industrialisation. We got some great elements from commons.wikimedia.org, although check the rights. Load the CD-ROM for freebies. Cut them out using the Pen tool and turn them into Smart Objects.



11 The engine room

At the core of the steampunk subgenre are the steam-powered engines that drive the fantastic machines created within its context. We downloaded image number 1485800 from dreamstime.com and cut out the handle to place in the foreground.



12 Adding depth

Place the rest of the engine in your scene near the bottom of the layer hierarchy, just above your background layer. Match the position with the handle by nudging the layer with the arrow keys – you will need the Move tool active for this.



13 Masking off

With the engine layer selected, go to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All. This will create a blank Layer Mask icon on this layer. Select the Polygonal Lasso tool and mask off where the engine creeps over the pipes. Press Shift+F5 and fill with black.



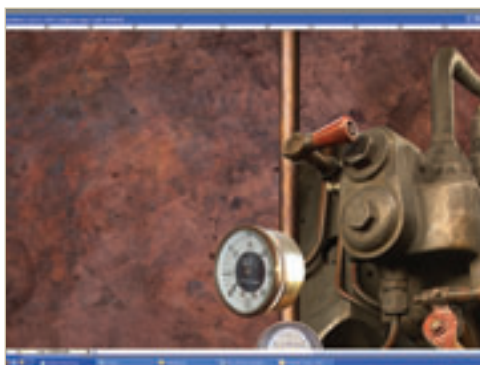
14 Pen tool paths

The new engine layer has interfered with some of our other elements, so don't be afraid to move or delete them. Mask off the other parts of the engine you don't need by drawing a path with the Pen tool and converting it into a selection you can fill with black.



15 Cloning more pipe

Now go to Select>Inverse then pick the Clone Stamp tool (S). Selecting the layer icon and not the mask layer icon, hold Alt to define a source point (use the bottom edge of the pipe) then release Alt and paint over the destination with a soft-edged brush (follow the line of the pipe).



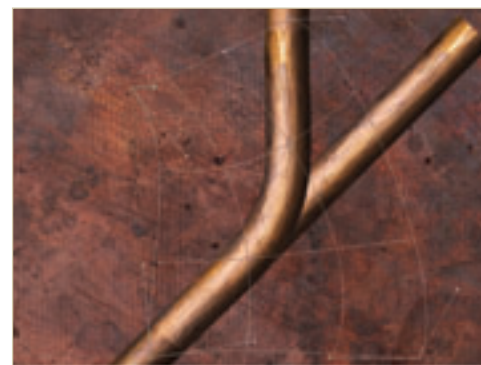
16 Getting a handle

The last part of integrating the engine into the scene is running the handle to the top left over the pipes. Duplicate the engine layer and drag to the top of the layer hierarchy. Draw a path around the overlapping part and mask this off to reveal the handle.



17 Intersect the pipes

Turn off all layers apart from the pipes that we're going to weld. Rasterise these so they are no longer Smart Objects (Layer>Rasterize>Layer). Use the Polygonal Lasso tool to select a length of the diagonal pipe, then cut and paste onto a new layer.



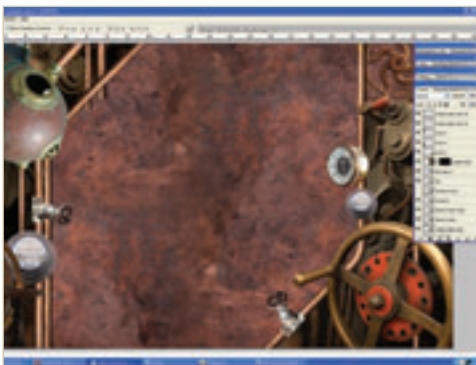
18 Warp speed

To curve the pipe ensuring maximum control, we'll need to use the Warp tool. Go to Edit>Transform>Warp and you'll see a grid appear over the pipe intersection. All of the grid intersections and Bezier curve arms can be manipulated, so pull them around until you get the desired effect.



19 Spot welding

Select the excess piping with the Polygonal Lasso tool and hit the Delete key. Apply a Reveal All Layer Mask to the intersection layer and paint out the hard edges with a big soft-edged brush, set to around 30 per cent layer Opacity. Go over the areas until you get a seamless blend.



20 Leaky pipes

Keep building up your steampunk style with more pipes and antique objects, like this old diving helmet from dreamstime.com (ref: 2802165). Get creative with the pipes by foregrounding one, duplicating it and rotating to give the appearance that it has split.



21 Syntax isn't taxing

Incorporating text into this style is simple enough. Select the Text tool and create some text. Go to Window>Character and click on the colour rectangle within the palette. Sample a light colour from your canvas and then set the Layer blending mode to Hard Light.

IN DETAIL

Creating your own steam using brushes

Rather than attempting to photograph steam or buying a stock photo that satisfies your needs, why not create your own steam simply using the Paintbrush, Smudge and Warp tools?

CREATING STEAM THAT works within the context of your steampunk environment doesn't demand that you're a Photoshop guru. Through creatively using simple tools and techniques, you can master the art in minutes.

To create fast-moving steam, first of all make a layer and call it 'steam'. Select a soft-edged paint brush with a pixel diameter of 160 and load it with 25 per cent black. Stamp it down once ensuring that the brush Opacity is at 100 per cent. Then reduce the pixel diameter to 50 pixels, load the brush with white and stamp it in the centre of your grey blob on the same layer. Go to Edit>Transform>Scale and adjust the width to 850 per cent and the height to 60 per cent. Now go to Edit>Transform>Warp and pull the Warp grid as shown in the screengrab, creating a funnel shape. Duplicate this layer and halve the height by 50 per cent to bolster the source of the steam where it emits from the pipe. Finish this off by erasing what you don't need using a large soft-edged brush.

Select the original steam layer and we're going to use the Smudge tool from the Tools palette to create a cloud with subtle swirls. Use a 90-pixel soft-edged brush and set the Smudge strength to around 40 per cent, then start smudging out from the steam cloud. Think about how steam disperses and gets less dense further from the source. The smoke is too dense and too uniform so using the Eraser tool with soft-edged brush at 100 pixels, set the Opacity to 25 per cent and blot out sporadically. Next up, we need to thin the steam out, so go to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All and use a large (400 pixels) soft brush loaded with black, and set it to an Opacity of 20 per cent. Gently mask off the steam at the points furthest from its source.

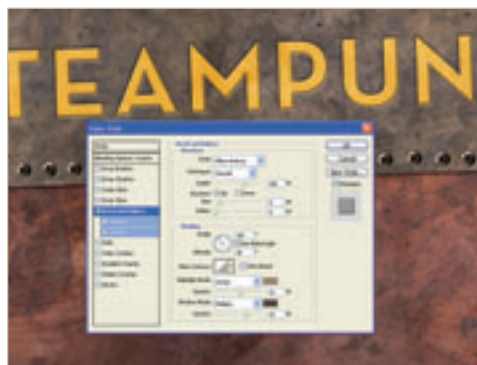
This technique's all about experimenting with the smudging and the brush sizes/Opacity so keep playing until you nail it. We added a little noise to add texture. Go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise – about six per cent should do it.



You can pull all parts of the Warp grid including the intersecting grid lines to get the desired shape. Here we're going for a funnel



Experiment with different brush sizes and Smudge strengths to get all steamed up



22 Pillow Emboss

With the text layer selected, go to Layer>Layer Style>Bevel and Emboss. Select the Pillow Emboss style from the drop-down menu and set it up as in the screengrab, sampling the highlight and shadow colours from the canvas. Don't go overboard as it can look really fake.



23 Colour and finish

Select the topmost layer and go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation. Tick the Colorize box and set Hue to 30 and Saturation to 36. Duplicate this and set the blending mode to Overlay (layer Opacity 50 per cent) on one and Color (layer Opacity 20 per cent) on the other.

Creative Blog >> Photoshop

Technique / Photoshop / Picture-perfect detail



Just how do you get the 'Photoshopped' look?

EVER WONDERED HOW digital images obtain such a crisp finish? Of course, a high-end camera can make all the difference, but how do photo-manipulation artists and photographers get such delineation in their compositions? Well, Photoshop has all the answers through built-in tools and functions as well as endorsed plug-ins. Photo sharpening is an essential process so designers like Mike Campau (www.seventhstreetstudio.com) and Justin Maller (www.superlover.com.au) can ensure crisp on-screen and professional print standard imagery, which can be obtained easily in as few as three steps.

Photoshop users should begin by opening their desired image and proceed by holding Ctrl and clicking the image layer, then selecting Duplicate from the drop-down menu. Next, apply an Overlay blend from the Layers palette's Blend Mode drop-down menu and select Filter>Other>High Pass. In the High Pass dialog box, you can set a pixel Radius in accordance to your image size. In most cases, if working with 300dpi large-format imagery, which is preferable, no more than a 4-6 Radius is necessary for the best effect. Upon clicking OK, the effects are instantly noticeable and can be edited using the Layer Opacity or Layer Mask functions.

DOWNLOAD LIST

Photoshop-related downloads that will make your design more effective and creative

Go Media Texture Pack Sample

<http://gomedia.us/arsenal/freestuff.php>

This all-inclusive texture freebie includes high-res photographic samples, such as concrete, wood, masonry, rust and paint, to add your images some quality. Find some on our CD!

Aurius brushes

<http://booyakaja.deviantart.com/art/AURIUS-89415868>

Ten sensual brush examples that are free to download, yet they must be credited to Booyakaja at www.deviantart.com.

DJ Monkeyboy

www.djmonkeyboy.com

Nostalgic of old sticker and tattoo packs, this retro site provides visitors with free packs of zany vectors, fonts and textures. However, we just love the Monkey's Big Ass Vector 2.

Texture King

www.textureking.com

Texture King is rapidly becoming the site to gather quality royalty-free texture stock, all for the price of nothing. Inclusive of a range of textiles, imagery is free and ready to download.

BE INSPIRED



THE DESIGNERS REPUBLIC

www.thedesignedesignersrepublic.com

If you haven't yet discovered The Designers Republic, then get to a computer and online as soon as is humanely possible. Your first stop ought to be to check out the eclectic array of product design samples that should really get any good web designer or developer's creative juices flowing, as well as inspiring new styles and methods of their own. With over two decades of experience, The Designers Republic has all the contemporary creative answers. Visitors just need to log on and they can indulge in the innovative website straightaway, which has interactive sound bites as well as a visual feast – check out the Supergrass album covers among various other huge multinational clients. Easy to use, it is a real aesthetic tour de force that will inspire and motivate most modern designers.



YOUR EXPERT

Adam Smith, senior staff writer for *Advanced Photoshop*, has over five years of digital design experience under his belt. Adam is sharing his own authoritative insight and Photoshop knowledge within this new-look Photoshop Tech Support section.

Creative Blog

Mixing and mashing the latest in design



NEWS FEED

PICTOPLASMA NYC

The Pictoplasma project, founded in 1999 with the world's first extensive inventory of contemporary character design, is hitting New York City on 11 and 12 September. Visitors will be able to digest an international scene of artists, designers and agencies. Visit www.pictoplasma.com/nyc.



NEWS FEED

MAKE YOUR OWN NANIBIRD

We all love creative keepsakes, and now the NaniBird, a creation of McKibillo a.k.a. Josh McKible, has nested itself among the must-have apparel. Visiting www.nanibird.com, you can download, print, cut and design your very own styles and samples, hatching a little NaniBird of your very own.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

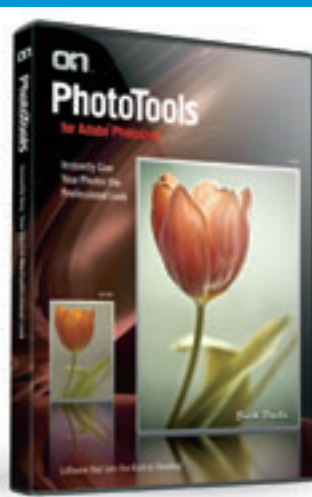


BLACK & WHITE FREEDRAWINGS

www.zeptonn.nl

This book just popped its way into the office last week, and instantly it caught our imaginations. Brought to you by Jan Willem Wenneks, the creator of the popular Zeptonn design lab, *Black & White Freedrawings* is a feast of nostalgic style, contemporary characterisation and its uncontaminated visual approach.

PLUG-IN OF THE MONTH



ONONE PHOTOTOOLS 1.0

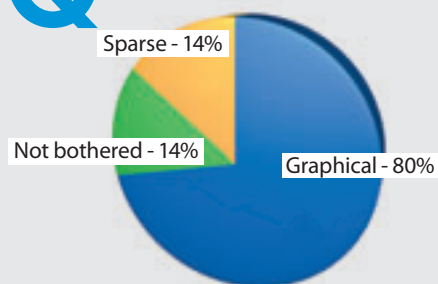
www.ononesoftware.com

PhotoTools 1.0 plug-in for Photoshop CS2 and CS3 is the latest in an innovative product line of plug-ins supplied to the creative public by onOne. This plug-in offers users the ability to create contemporary and inspiring special photo effects, from over 30 years of Photoshop knowledge in its functions.

WHAT YOU SAID ON THE FORUM



Are you attracted to graphically heavy websites or more sparse designs?



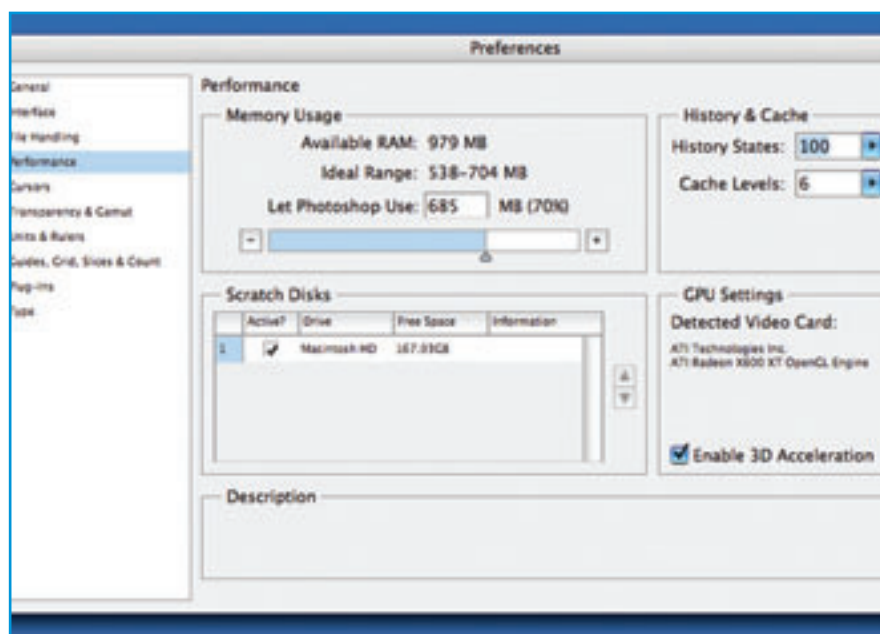
THIS ISSUE



With enthusiastic artists cashing in on their commercial standard work, where would you say seems to be the best place to sell your creative wares online?

- i) www.deviantart.com ii) www.redbubble.com
 - iii) Through your own personal website
- Vote now by visiting the **Web Designer** forum at www.webdesignermag.co.uk/forum

Technique / Photoshop / Preferences performance



Make stressing out over mistakes a thing of the past

WHEN WORKING IN Photoshop, it's best to implement preplanning so that file and image management is optimum at all times. This is where the Photoshop Preference options become fundamental to working practices. To active this option set, simply select Photoshop>Preferences (Mac) or Edit>Preferences (Windows). Here, you can set and control a multitude of productive commands.

In General options, users should note the History Log option specifically. Users should continue to set Save Log Items To as Metadata and Edit Log Items as Detailed. This embeds specific application data into an image file, which can be very useful if you overlook how you achieved a specific effect previously, and can check tools and function settings by opening an image and selecting File>File Info>History.

Another useful preference is History & Cache, under the Performance options. This is essential for professional and enthusiastic creatives working on multiple-layered imagery. Here, you can apply a set amount of History States. The larger the number, the more nondestructive steps you can take back in a live image. After all, it can be stressful you're when halfway through the creative process and rethinking an application, only to find the step you wish to revisit has been erased. With Preferences, these mishaps become a thing of the past.



THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE

Learn about CSS3's new features, how they operate and who supports them

TIME REQUIRED

45 minutes

SKILL LEVEL



A close-up view of CSS3

THE LATEST CSS STANDARDS ARE BEING THOROUGHLY TESTED AT THIS VERY MOMENT. WE TAKE A PEEK AT WHAT DESIGNERS AND DEVELOPERS CAN EXPECT WHEN THEY'RE READY

CSS IS THE lifeblood of great web design and with CSS3 just around the corner, we thought we'd take a look at what designers and developers can expect. Before we even venture into some of the more exciting and expected features, we cannot continue without mentioning browser support. The current crop of browsers offer a varied, though some might say poor, range of support. All of them support the new standards in varying degrees, but it seems some offer better support than others, which will be noted throughout.

Of all the new standards expected in CSS3, curved corners has proved to be the most desired among all the hype. And the new Border-Radius feature doesn't disappoint either. This option not only adds curves to every corner, but also allows for the selection of individual corners. In addition, you can add in border widths, border colours and element colours to get great results. This is only the tip of the CSS3 iceberg, so read on to take a look at some of the other great features expected and find out exactly what they can do.



YOUR EXPERT

Steve Jenkins is a keen designer and developer, who started creating websites after attending Bournemouth University and loves tackling the most testing of Dreamweaver problems. To see a sample of Steve's work, take a visit to www.thesouthend.co.uk.

A close-up view of CSS3



01 Curved corners

It's difficult to know where to begin so we thought we'd start with one of the most discussed and sought-after additions to CSS: rounded corners. CSS3 introduces Border-Radius, which takes up the mantle of adding rounded corners to an element, ie a <div> tag. Currently, this is only supported by Firefox and Safari with Opera and Internet Explorer, leaving viewers with a simple, straight-edged box. The basic Border-Radius property is written as border-radius: a value is then added to establish the curve of the corner. Sounds nice and simple, and it is, but there are specifics that need to be put into place to work in a specific browser. The prefix -moz is added for support in Firefox, while Safari needs the -webkit prefix. If adding to a tag, the code would like this: -moz-border-radius: 10px; (Firefox), -webkit-border-radius: 11px; These only add the curve radius to the tag; to style up the tag, a few more additions are needed. Here is an example of a styled <div> tag:

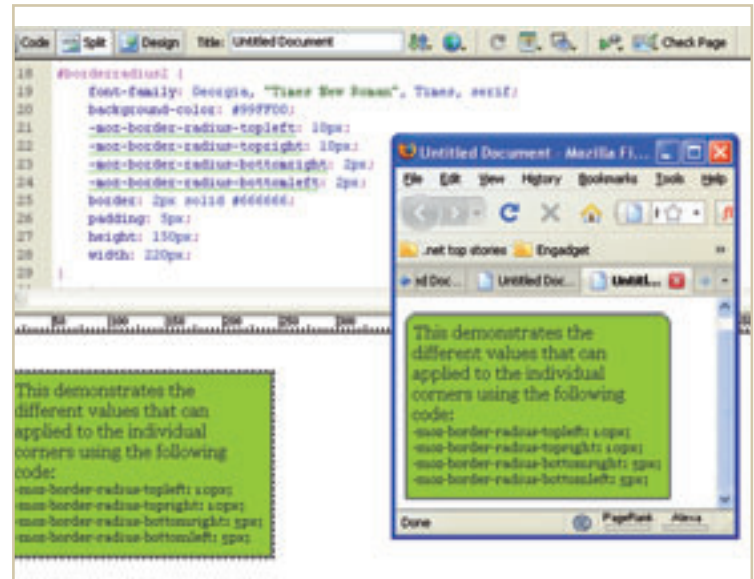
```
<div style="background-color: #FF9900;
-moz-border-radius: 10px;
-webkit-border-radius: 11px;
border: 10px solid #000;
padding: 10px;">
```

This is a simple example of what can be achieved with the addition of both the elements. The background-color establishes the background colour, while border: establishes the width, style and colour of the border. Play with these settings to find a style that suits. It is also worth noting that -moz-border-radius effectively has a maximum of 15 pixels, while -webkit-border-radius: has a maximum of 11 pixels. Try going over the 11-pixel limit and the Safari browser will revert back to a standard square corner.

This code example will produce a variation of the original CSS with much sharper corners, a much thinner border and a different colour background. To customise the tag even further, try adding in height and width selectors. These can be specific measurements or alternatively the per cent value can be used. This allows the tag to be resized to fit the current screen.

```
<div style="background-color: #000000;
-moz-border-radius: 2px;
-webkit-border-radius: 2px;
border: 1px solid #000;
padding: 10px;
height: 135px;
width: 100%;>
```

When using the Border-Radius property it is essential that the -moz or -webkit prefix is used. If neither of these prefixes are added the Border-Radius property becomes void and will not work.



02 Individual curves

The border-radius property is a great addition to any designer's toolbox, and the best bit is there is the option to apply curves to individual corners. These are again only currently supported by Firefox and Safari. To add individual corners in Firefox, the following code needs to be applied, -moz-border-radius-topleft: 10px. This will add a ten-pixel curve to the top-left corner of the chosen selector. To add to the remaining corners, the following properties need to be added: -moz-border-radius-topright, -moz-border-radius-bottomleft, -moz-border-radius-bottomright. Try adding different radiuses for different corners to get a more unique effect, eg:

```
-moz-border-radius-topleft: 10px;
-moz-border-radius-topright: 10px;
-moz-border-radius-bottomright: 5px;
-moz-border-radius-bottomleft: 5px;
```

Applying the same principle so that Safari renders the border-radius property correctly involves slightly different syntax. This uses the following, -webkit-border-top-left-radius, -webkit-border-top-right-radius, -webkit-border-bottom-left-radius and -webkit-border-bottom-right-radius. The same principle applies, for example:

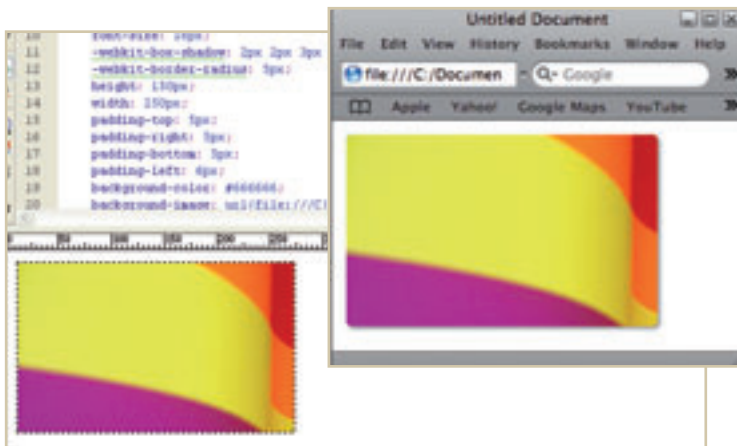
```
-webkit-border-top-left-radius: 10px;
-webkit-border-top-right-radius: 10px;
-webkit-border-bottom-left-radius: 5px;
-webkit-border-bottom-right-radius: 5px;
```

Again this code needs to be placed inside a <div> tag with the necessary properties as mentioned the previous step, eg:

```
#borderradius2 {font-family: Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
background-color: #FF9900;
-moz-border-radius-topleft: 10px;
-moz-border-radius-topright: 10px;
-moz-border-radius-bottomright: 5px;
-moz-border-radius-bottomleft: 5px;
-webkit-border-top-left-radius: 10px;
border: 10px solid #666666;
padding: 5px;
height: 150px;
width: 200px;}
```

It is worth noting that border-radius is especially effective when the border width is at the lower end of the scale, eg: two pixels. Bumping the border width up to a higher value, ie: ten pixels, will still achieve this.

Tutorial



03 Box shadow

Adding shadows to an element has essentially been the work of an image editor. However, the introduction of box-shadow into the CSS3 backgrounds and borders module means that designers and developers can add shadows as they please with a little CSS. Currently, the property is only supported by Safari 3. The CSS is a single property, ie `-webkit-box-shadow`, which has a number of attributes. There is the Horizontal Offset, Vertical Offset, the Blur Radius and the Shadow Colour. This can be added as `10px 10px 5px #666666`; to the property to give the code as follows:

```
#boxshadow {
font-family: Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
font-size: 12px;
-webkit-box-shadow: 5px 5px 10px #FF3300;
height: 150px;
width: 250px;
padding-top: 5px;
padding-right: 5px;
padding-bottom: 5px;
padding-left: 3px;}
```

The first attribute is the Vertical offset, the second is the Horizontal, the third is the Blur Radius and the final attribute is the Shadow Colour. Experiment with offsets and colours to get the desired effect. For a more subtle effect, try `2px 2px 3px #CCCCCC`.

To Web 2.0 up any box, slip in the border-radius property to add some curved corners, for example:

```
-webkit-box-shadow: 2px 2px 3px #CCCCCC
-webkit-border-radius: 5px;
```



04 Coloured borders

Curved corners may have grabbed the headlines in CSS3, but another interesting development is the border-colour property. This extends the remit of borders even further and with some clever use of colour, combinations can produce some great results.

Currently, it is only supported in Firefox, but when it's better supported it is sure to get the attention it deserves. To demonstrate its potential, try adding the following code:

```
#bordercolour {
font-family: Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
border: 2px solid #000;
-moz-border-bottom-colors: #CCCCCC #999999 #666666 #333333 #000000;
```

```
-moz-border-top-colors: #CCCCCC #999999 #666666 #333333 #000000;
-moz-border-left-colors: #CCCCCC #999999 #666666 #333333 #000000;
-moz-border-right-colors: #CCCCCC #999999 #666666 #333333 #000000;
padding: 5px 5px 5px 15px;}
```

This demonstrates a fading border by using a selection of colours that are relatively close. Try changing the actual colours and amount of colours applied to each border. A bigger border, ie: eight pixels, does give a better representation of border-colour. In a simpler form, the border can simply be one pixel with a selection of chosen colours.



05 Border image

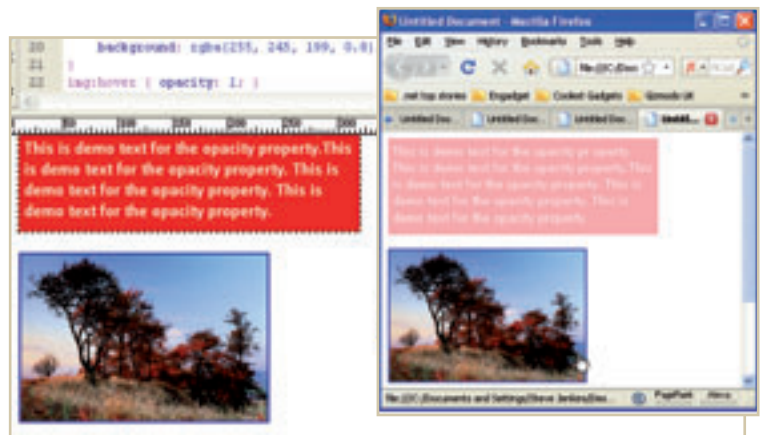
With the current CSS standards, borders have been very much restricted to size, style and colour. Undoubtedly, a perfectly acceptable combination that has brought great success for many and inspired creativity.

However, the introduction of the Border-Image property, along

with some very useful values, means that the border is set for a new lease of life. Currently only supported in Safari 3, the property allows for the use of images in varying sizes and positions. The code is a one-line affair, with a single selector taking control. It is Values that make the selector interesting. The following code is a simple use of border-image:

```
-webkit-border-image: url(worldwide_us.png) 20 20 20 20 round round;
```

The first value URL determines the location of the image to be used. The second value determines the size on all sides; each individual value can be adjusted to suit. The third value round effectively tells the property to repeat the image on all sides. The alternative option is to replace round with stretch, which effectively uses one image and stretches to the defined width. Experiment with the border image sizes, as you will generally find that a smaller size is actually bigger, though the results depend on the image itself. Plus, combine the round and stretch values to get a quirky combination.



06 Opacity

Opacity is a simple but very effective effect, which can give elements an obvious statement of intent. It is a single property that uses a range of values to decide its output. The opacity range starts at 0.1 and goes up to one. The highest value, one, applies no opacity to an element, while the lowest value applies the highest opacity. The following code demonstrates how opacity can be applied to different elements within a webpage.

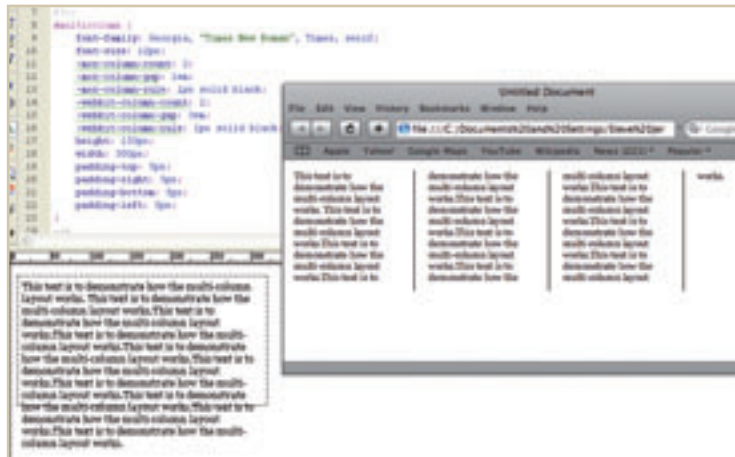
```
#op {background-color: #FF0000; opacity: 0.3;}
```

This is a simple `<div>` tag that has a background colour applied to it along with an opacity. This gives it an opaque effect, but still retains the element of colour. The style of an element such as a `<div>` tag can be extended to include other properties and values, as shown here:

```
#altop {font-family: Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
font-size: 12px;
background-color: #FF0000; opacity: 0.3;}
```

Not only does the tag now have a opaque, coloured background, but it also has styled text to accompany it.

The Opacity property can also be applied to other elements, such as the image tag, eg, `img { opacity: 0.7; }`. This will apply an opacity rating of 0.7 to all images within the selected page. Another interesting application of the property is to include the hover value to image, eg, `img:hover { opacity: 1; }`. Note that this has a different opacity to the `img` tag. This means that each time the cursor hovers over an image, it changes the opacity value from 0.7 to one, making the image more prominent.



07 Multi-column layout

Tables were good at multi-column layouts but CSS struggles, although there are workarounds that get the job done. The inclusion of the `column` property means that text can easily spread across as many columns as desired with a few lines of code. The property is only currently supported by Firefox and Safari, and both render the code differently. For the complete article, Safari is currently the only browser to use. The code is split into three sections. There is `column-count`, `column-gap` and `column-rule`. Both of these are prefixed by `-moz` and `-webkit` to ensure that they work with Firefox and Safari respectively. The following code is a typical example of how the multi-column layout works:

```
#multicolumn {
font-family: Georgia, "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
font-size: 12px;
-moz-column-count: 2;
-moz-column-gap: 1em;
-moz-column-rule: 1px solid black;
-webkit-column-count: 2;
-webkit-column-gap: 3em;
-webkit-column-rule: 1px solid black;
height: 150px;
width: 300px;
padding-top: 5px;
padding-right: 5px;
padding-bottom: 5px;
padding-left: 5px;}
```

`Column-count` determines how many columns a user would like. We say "would like" because the width of the element and the content, ie text, does have a bearing on the column count. `Column-gap` determines the gap between the columns, while `column-rule` adds a vertical line between the columns. The value decides the width of the rule and colour. Unfortunately, even though Firefox has the `-moz-column-rule` included, it does not display.

The `-webkit-column-rule` is a little temperamental, not allowing hexadecimal colours, only simple colours, eg, black, grey, red, blue, etc, which need to be preceded by solid to work effectively.

IN DETAIL

CSS specifications

The new generation of browsers offers intermittent support for the new CSS3 standard. Firefox 3.0 and Safari 3 are leading with Opera 9.5 and IE playing catch up.

THROUGHOUT THE PAGES of this article we have mentioned `-moz` and `-webkit` on numerous occasions, so what are they? Essentially, these are CSS specifications or extensions that expand the power of CSS but only to the relevant browser. As you might expect the `-moz` extension, is an abbreviation of Mozilla and is related to the Firefox browser. The `webkit` extension is related to the Safari browser and is the name of the system framework engine used by the browser. Both of these are included within the workings of the latest browsers, namely Firefox 3, Safari 3, and help extend its CSS support and capabilities.

The Mozilla Developer Center (http://developer.mozilla.org/en/docs/Main_Page) gives the lowdown on the technologies the team is working on. Accessing the CSS Extensions page (http://developer.mozilla.org/en/docs/Mozilla_CSS_Extensions) gives an insight into the supported extensions that are currently prefaced by `'-moz'`. There are over 160 extensions, some of which have been proposed for inclusion in the CSS3 standard. Click any of the extensions to get a more detailed description of the property and discover whether or not the selector has been proposed for CSS3.

WebKit is more than just a CSS extension, but we are going to concentrate on how it interacts with CSS. As you may already know CSS is a World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) specification and `webkit` is dedicated to implementing all spec support into the Safari browser. Currently, there is complete CSS1 support, almost complete CSS2.1 support, and support for various CSS3 selectors, many which we have already mentioned.

For more information and to help build a better browser take a visit to the CSS2.1 Test Suite page at www.w3.org/Style/CSS/Test/CSS2.1/current. The test suite is currently incomplete but W3C states, "In time we hope to correct all errors and extend this test suite to cover all of CSS2.1. Your help is welcome in this effort." So if you think you got what it takes pay the site a visit.

For more information about CSS3 the World Wide Web Consortium website is an invaluable resource. A visit to the Cascading Style Sheets homepage (www.w3.org/Style/CSS) reveals announcements, schedules and the development progress of CSS3.

CASCADING STYLE SHEETS CURRENT WORK

This page contains descriptions and a rough schedule of what the CSS WG (Cascading Style Sheets Working Group) is working on. If you want to follow the development of CSS3, this page is the place to start. Publication description within the working group. (See [explanation](#).)

High Priority	Current	Upcoming
CSS Level 2 Revision 1	Candidate Recommendation	Proposed Recommendation
Selection Level 3	Last Call	Last Call
CSS Mobile Profile 2.0	Last Call	Candidate Recommendation
CSS Marquee Level 3		Working Draft
Medium Priority	Current	Upcoming

The World Wide Web Consortium site gives an insight in to the development progress of the CSS3 standard

mozilla developer center beta



The Mozilla Developer Center lists all the currently supported extensions prefaced by `moz`

Tutorial



08 Text effect

Text effects are not technically a new specification on the CSS3 standard, but it has yet to receive great all-round browser support. Why? We're not so sure, but text-shadow has had the capability to add shadows to text for some time – in fact, since the early versions of Safari. Currently, it is only supported by Safari 3 and Opera 9.5.

Creating text effects has been the domain of image-editing software, but greater support could relieve designers of an essential but often tedious task, and free up their workflow for even more creativity.

To create a simple text effect, eg, simple grey shadow, add the following code to an element, ie: <div> tag.

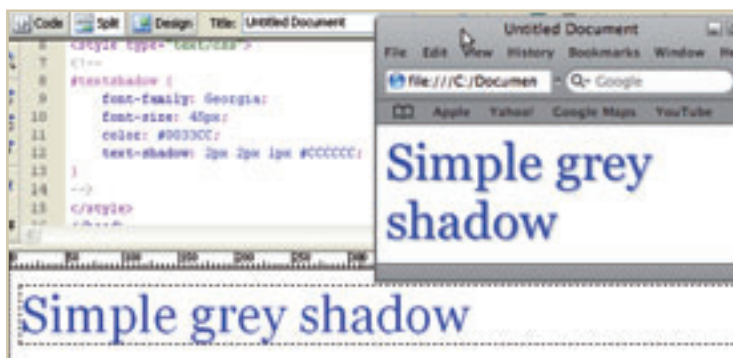
```
#textshadow {
font-family: Georgia;
font-size: 45px;
color: #0033CC;
text-shadow: 2px 2px 1px #CCCCCC;}
```

The first value relates to distance from left (horizontal), the second is distance from text, ie: below (vertical). Third is blur of the shadow – the higher the number, the more blur there is. The final component is the shadow colour.

Try experimenting with the different values and the background colours. For example, if designing on a page with a dark, essentially black background, try the following code:

```
#textshadow {
font-family: Georgia;
font-size: 88px;
color: #FFFFFF;
text-shadow: 0px -4px 12px #FF9900;
text-align: center;
background-color: #333333;
font-weight: bolder;}
```

Note that the first value has a zero value. This negates any shadow and the second value has a minus value, which effectively places the shadow above the text. The blur is given a larger value and the colour is a contrasting colour to the background.



09 Resize

We think this will prove to be a very interesting addition to the designer/developer arsenal, especially if it is as well supported as it is expected to be. Currently, the Resize selector is only supported by Safari 3.

In a nutshell the Resize property allows users to resize an element within a webpage. A perfect example is a <div> tag that can be stretched using the Resize handle. When resizing the elements can be resized vertically and horizontally, much like a pop-up window. The following code is a simple example of how the property can be implemented:

```
#resize {
width: 100px;
height: 100px;
border: 1px solid;
resize: both;
overflow: auto;}
```

The Resize property in the aforementioned code boasts the value both that enables the element to be resized in both directions. The width and height of the element defines the size of element as first seen on screen. This is also the minimum size that the element can be resized to. Resize also supports resize: horizontal and resize: vertical. Adding Horizontal to the Resize element effectively means that it can be resized along the Horizontal axis. To ensure that this works accordingly the max-width and min-width need to be implemented as follows:

```
#resize {
border: 1px solid;
resize: horizontal;
max-width: 400px;
min-width: 100px;
overflow: auto;}
```

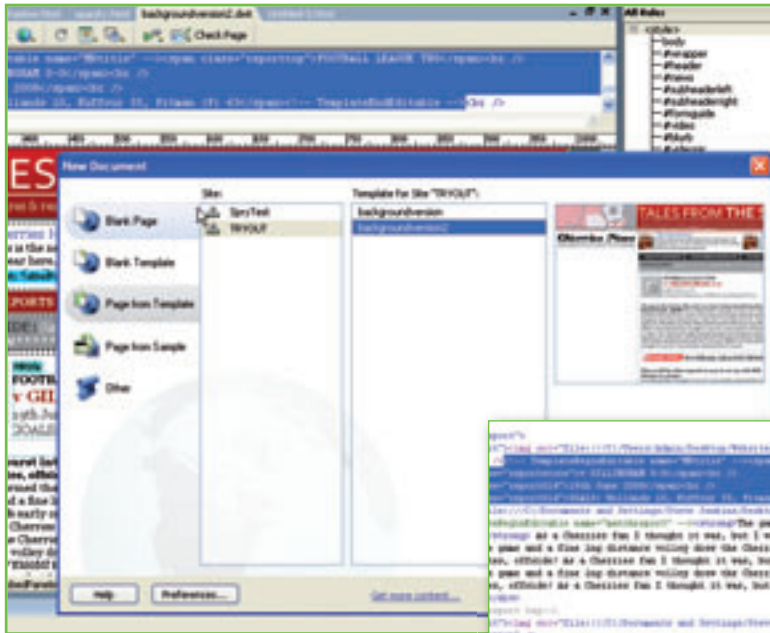
This ensures that the element is never smaller than 100 pixels in width and never has that width exceeding 400 pixels. The height of the element is effectively infinite. The same principle applies to resize vertical, except that this employs the max-height and a min-height properties.

```
#resize {
border: 1px solid;
resize: vertical;
max-height: 400px;
min-height: 100px;
overflow: auto;}
```

This code allows the elements to resize to full screen width but only allows a minimum height of 100 pixels and maximum height of 400 pixels.



Technique / HTML / Create a Dreamweaver template



We show you how to transform a page into a template in Dreamweaver

TEMPLATES ARE A great way to improve workflow, but more importantly, they bring consistency to page design. Once a page has been tested to completion, it can be turned into a template ready for reuse. To turn any page into a template, open up and head to File>Save As Template. This will save the page with the DWT extension, which will make it editable when opened directly in Dreamweaver. However, when creating a new page from the template (New>Page from Template>Site>Template>Create), it will display the template as an HTML file with no editable regions. To create editable regions, open the DWT file, select the text or element and go to Insert>Template Objects>Editable Region. This will open the New Editable Region dialog window. Enter a relevant name, press OK and save. Now repeat the process for all the elements that are to be editable and save the document. Head back to New>Page from Template>Site>Template>Create, to view the new version of the template. Select the template and open. Now the only areas that are available for editing are the previously created editable regions. To remove a region in a DWT file, first open and right-click on the region title. Select Remove Tag from the context menu, and Dreamweaver will automatically remove the appropriate code. Now save the file, ready to use the new improved template.

DOWNLOAD LIST

Tools that will make your design more effective, creative and undoubtedly better

3D Luggage

<http://qvector.com/vector-symbols/3d-luggage-tag/>

Designed by MacDaddy Design, this 3D luggage vector image is free and fully customisable. This 14MB Illustrator file is an excellent addition, especially for any travel-based sites.

CSS Toolbox

www.blumentals.net/csstool

CSS Toolbox is freeware productivity software for designers and developers who count on CSS. Included in the package is a simple CSS editor, a CSS formatter and CSS checker/validator.

Free WordPress Themes

www.wpthemesfree.com

WordPress is an impressive free blog-publishing tool. However, its basic themes are exactly that – basic. There are hundreds of free WordPress themes that can make your blog beautiful.

Creampuff

www.urbanfonts.com

A great name for a great free font in the handwriting style. The full character set includes uppercase, lowercase, numeric and a range of useful additions.

BE INSPIRED



CONCLAVE OBSCURUM

www.cmart.design.ru

This site is a masterpiece in inspiration, imagination and design. Rarely have we seen anything that matches Conclave Obscurum, and the best bit is it's not even in English, which only adds to its mystique. Driven exclusively by Flash, the layout and navigation belies many of the traditional techniques, but still retains enough influence to point users in the right direction. Clever little elements populate the pages, offering enough fascination to become real time wasters. Such is the visual stimulation of the site, there is almost no need for the audio soundtrack. However, switch on your speakers and the site is elevated to yet another level. Vinyl hiss and crackles interspersed with simple looping melodies create a haunting background ambience. Go visit this now!



YOUR EXPERT

Steve Jenkins is a keen designer and developer, who started creating websites after attending Bournemouth University and loves tackling the most testing of Dreamweaver problems. To see a sample of Steve's work, take a visit to www.thesouthend.co.uk.

Creative Blog

Mixing and mashing the latest in design



NEWS FEED

PIKUM

If you fancy a bet without the need to splash the cash, or want to pit your prediction wits against friends, colleagues and even celebrities, then try Pikum (www.pikum.com). This is a new kind of betting game, created and played between friends online. See if you come out as top dog!



NEWS FEED

SICK NOTE

If you fancy a couple of extra days off work but don't want to use up your holiday, take a visit to www.doctorsnotestore.com. Get yourself an authentic-looking replica doctor's sick note or medical certificate. Written on official doctor notepaper, with a real stamp, it's only £25 for two.

BOOK OF THE MONTH



WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

Improve your page's performance

Everyone thinks their website is a masterpiece, but there is generally always room for improvement. *Website Optimization* is here to help and reveals a comprehensive set of techniques to improve a site's performance. It also measures a site's effectiveness with best-practice metrics and tools.

EXTENSION OF THE MONTH



SEARCH STATUS

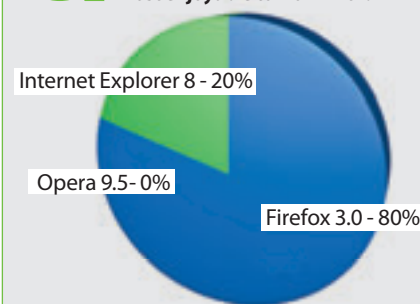
<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox>

SearchStatus is a toolbar extension for Firefox that allows users to get a quick update on how a web page is performing. It uses a compact toolbar that can be placed in various positions in the browser, to give an instant visual hit on its Google Page Rank and Alexa ranking.

WHAT YOU SAID ON THE FORUM



The current poll asked the question 'With all the next-generation browsers available, which do you find easiest and most enjoyable to work with?'



THIS ISSUE

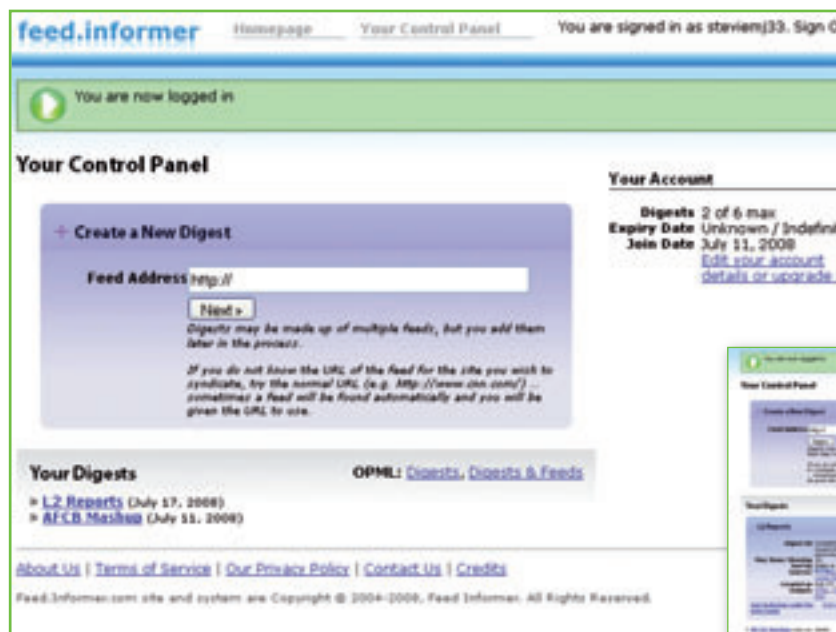


Should the major browser vendors join forces to agree universal support for web standards?

i) Yes ii) No iii) We live in hope

Vote now by visiting the *Web Designer* forum at www.webdesignermag.co.uk/forum

Technique / RSS / Add an RSS feed from multiple sources



Ensure you get the RSS you're after with Feed Informer

RSS FEEDS ARE a great way to insert the latest up-to-date news into your web pages without the hassle of actually having to source the stories. Simply find an RSS feed that fits the bill and add the code to insert into the page. There are plenty of online RSS creators, but few that allow multiple feeds to be integrated into a single feed. One online option that allows users to choose multiple feeds is Feed Informer. Sign up at <http://feed.informer.com> and get six free 'digests'. The software is simple enough to use and allows users to create a customised feed in minutes.

The beauty of the program, apart from being free, is that it allows users

to edit the templates to match their site. After selecting the feeds to be included and the various options, ie how many stories, click Edit Templates; this allows users to modify the HTML. A quick tip here is to copy the code, paste into Dreamweaver, modify, copy back into the digest and press Save Changes. Once created, Feed Informer then creates the code needed to include in a web page. There are plenty of options here, including JavaScript, Flash, PHP, ASP and more. Plus, a 'digest' is fully customisable at any point in its life cycle.

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A new addition to our site is the official *Web Designer* blog where you'll find posts on the latest news and industry points of interest. Be sure to check by here for announcements on forthcoming issues, features and promotions – plus insights into what the team are up to.



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EXTENDING MAGAZINE CONTENT

Visit the site and you'll be able to enjoy the kind of monthly features that *Web Designer* does best. Pick through exclusive interviews with top agencies and designers, read special features and also access digital versions of regular sections from the magazine. You can even view an interactive sample of *Web Designer* pages!

TAKE INSPIRATION FROM THE VERY BEST

One of the things that *Web Designer* is never shy of doing is paying respect to those URLs that are currently defining the cutting-edge of our industry. Straight from the regular Gallery pages of the magazine, we've created a growing online archive of links to the latest and greatest examples. If your favourite isn't there, let us know about it now!

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The site is a vital resource for gaining information about the monthly publication, particularly if you've not encountered it before. You can also follow links offering subscription details and access to the eShop for purchasing any back issues you've missed. Check out the Imagine brochure site to learn about our other titles too!



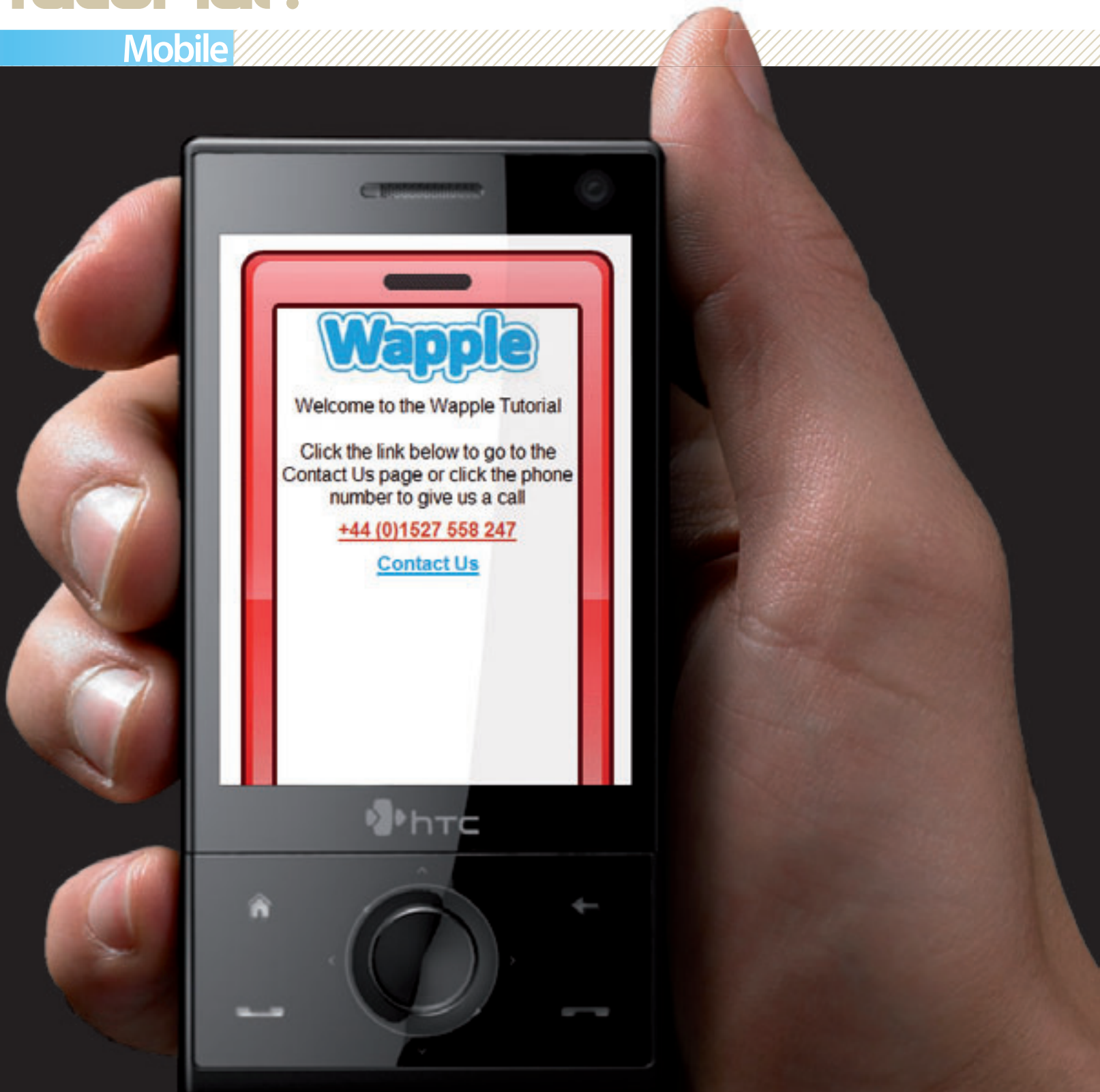
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Web Designer isn't just a magazine, oh no. We're a community, so why not get communicating with like-minded designers and developers? Our official magazine forum is just waiting to hear from you, so there's really no excuse for keeping your opinions to yourself. Signing up is dead easy and completely free to everyone, while there are plenty of subject threads covering the key topics. Whether you've been demonised by Dreamweaver, out-foxed by Flash or just become phased by Photoshop, this is the perfect place to share your troubles and triumphs with our members. It's also the ideal opportunity to post links to your own work and gain valuable feedback on your latest projects – perhaps opening the door for your site being featured in the magazine. So go on, don't be a stranger, sign up to the forum today and play a vital part in the *Web Designer* community!

SPEAK OUT

www.webdesignermag.co.uk/forum





WORKING WITH WAPPLE

RICH HOLDSWORTH PRESENTS A SPECIAL GUIDE TO CREATING MOBILE SITES THAT COMMUNICATE AND INSPIRE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE



YOUR EXPERT

Rich Holdsworth is the CTO of Wapple.net, a UK company that develops tools for creating mobile internet sites that repurpose to any mobile browser and screen. As one of the first companies in the world to adopt the mobile internet, Wapple has unrivalled experience in building mobile internet sites and delivering mobile content. Rich has worked in mobile internet for six years and has a background in videogame design and production.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE

Create a styled mobile site with text, graphics, menu and a click-to-call icon

TIME REQUIRED

30 minutes

SKILL LEVEL



Take your first steps on the mobile internet

HAND-CODING A MOBILE SITE FROM SCRATCH IS NEAR ENOUGH IMPOSSIBLE. WAPPLE CANVAS ALLOWS YOU TO CREATE A STYLISH SITE THAT RENDERS ON ALL HANDSETS AND PUTS YOUR WEB PRESENCE IN THE PALM OF A HAND

THIS TUTORIAL ALLOWS you to scratch the surface of the mobile internet by creating a simple site through Wapple Canvas. It is the first step on the road to making dynamic, stylised, feature-rich sites that consumers want to visit again and again.

Once you have completed this tutorial, you will have gained a basic understanding of Wapple Canvas and its capabilities. You will have a site that you can view on any handset without compromising style or features. From this one small site, you will be able to add forms, polls and other interactive elements, as well as learning how to best serve your consumers, without it mattering where they are.

It does not matter where you are in the world, what mobile network you are on and what phone you have – the mobile internet will become accessible by all. So sit back and join us as we discuss the ten golden rules behind building any mobile websites and gradually work our way through nine practical stages of getting your first Wapple-powered presence up and running!

1) It must work on all devices

You wouldn't knowingly build a website that works in Firefox but crumbles in Internet Explorer. When it comes to the mobile internet, there are even more browsers out there, each with their quirks, issues, capabilities and shortcomings.

Mobiles are by their very nature communication devices, so expect visitors to your mobile site to tell all their friends about it if they like what they find. Friends often have very different handsets and can be disappointed if they can't access the site on their particular device.

Make sure your mobile internet site is built using technology that looks after screen sizes, mark-up variations, download restrictions and file types, or you will end up building loads of different versions to serve all the handsets out there.

Wapple Canvas can take care of this for you. Once you have built a site, you can leave it to the eXhibit delivery platform to automatically repurpose your masterpiece to any mobile device that visits it, without dumbing down to a lowest common denominator design.

“Make a mobile site with technology that looks after screen sizes, download restrictions and file types”

BUILDING A MOBILE INTERNET SITE

A brief step-by-step guide that will guide you to the creation of a simple, styled mobile website in no time. Welcome to the world of Wapple Canvas...



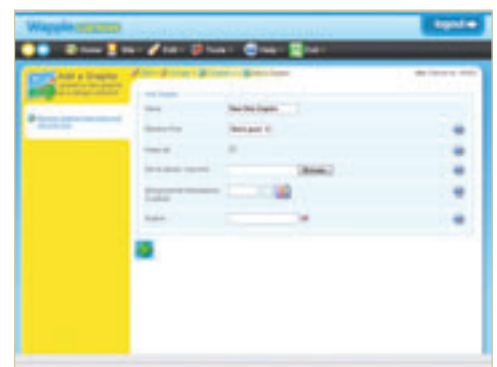
01 Getting a site

The first step is to register at www.wapple.net. This will give you access to Wapple Canvas and the features and functionality available within it. Once registered, log in and then go to the My Sites page and click Add a new site to add a site to your Account.



02 Wapple Canvas

Now you have added a site, select the Edit icon (small pencil). This will take you to Wapple Canvas Home. This is the hub of your site; it allows you to see your site and the URLs that will go to it. This page also includes the Latest Canvas News.



03 Uploading graphics

To add a graphic, go to Edit>Design>Graphics. Click Upload a new graphic as a design element, give your graphic a name and browse to the location of the graphic. Click the Plus button (green plus icon) and you will see that your graphic has been uploaded.

“Users will respond to sites that touch them on a personal level, through the language, imagery and copy”



Developing for mobile extends much further than wallpapers and games

2) White screens, black text and blue links are so 1998

Style has finally come to the mobile internet. Back in the early days of WAP, we were stuck with green screens and chunky black text. This soon evolved into white screens with chunky black text and, for a splash of colour, the occasional blue link.

What we were seeing back then was just WML (Wireless Markup Language) on the first generation of internet-enabled handsets. It is a compact language that has limited capability for layout and no ability to style elements on a page.

Nowadays, the picture is somewhat rosier. Modern handsets support XHTML MP and CSS, so styling is possible. If you ever find yourself browsing a site that doesn't look very good, it's probably that the platform has dumbed down to a WML page just to be certain it will display on your handset. Waple Canvas always makes sure that the best is made of your pages on any device.

3) Giving your site the personal touch

A text message trounces an old-fashioned telegram. Writing 'stop' all the time just doesn't cut it compared to some leetspeak from your nearest and dearest. Of course, mobile phones were traditionally used to help people communicate with one another efficiently, either by speaking or text. So why not continue this trend on your mobile internet website?

Put simply, users will respond far more positively to sites that touch them on a personal level, through aspects such as the language, imagery and copy. Talk to your visitors as if you know them personally and are genuinely interested in their wellbeing. Allow them to communicate with you and respond in turn through the website. Develop dialogue with your users and they will form a bond with you. It is all very simple. A user who develops a personal connection to your website will choose to return more frequently while out and about with some time to kill.

4) A WAP site is not a website

The mobile internet and the internet that you browse from a comfy chair on a 19-inch monitor are not the same thing. In fact, about all they share in common is some protocol and back-end systems. Grasp this fact and you are well on the road to building mobile websites that better serve a mobile audience.

Do not try to replicate a website as a mobile internet site. Much more thought has to go into exactly why a user is hitting you from their phone and what it is that they are looking for.

Mobile users do not visit websites to explore or experiment. When users browse the mobile internet, it is all about the immediate location and consumption of information. On small screens, there is no scope to bombard the user with erroneous data and opportunities – they will simply lose focus and cease to browse.

This is why even though full websites can be browsed on a handful of high-end devices, like the iPhone, the experience is never going to be as fulfilling as that provided by a website targeted at a mobile audience. One built with their expectations, their needs and their device's capabilities in mind is needed.

5) Balancing form and function

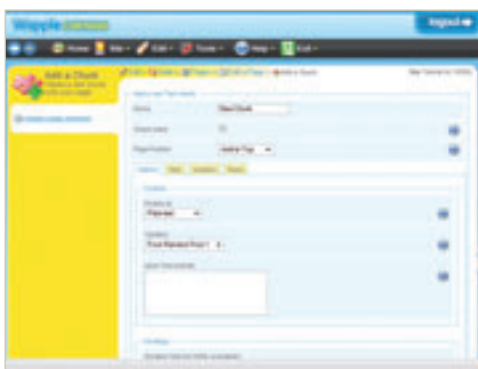
The mobile internet does not have the benefits of big fat data pipes pumping megabyte after megabyte at your browser. So while you may have aspirations to create a sliced-up masterpiece that reformats to every device, the reality is that you have to balance your art with the restrictions inherent with mobile browsers.

First of all, most devices have a very simple interface, generally a stick, which is used to move around the page. Therefore, you are going to have to build vertically. Try to let the important content rise to the very top of your pages. While it sounds nice to have a website logo at the top of every page, forcing a user to have to scroll down past it time after time will win you no friends.

Next, page download times can be an issue. Do not overload your website with graphics where text will do – menus are often a good example of this – and try to chunk your website into smaller pages linked with intelligent navigation.

6) Beyond wallpapers, ringtones and Java games

Sometimes it can seem that the only thing the mobile internet is for is mobile content. To continue this trend would be like suggesting that the internet proper is just there for us to download emoticons. The possibilities offered by a technology that delivers an interactive experience to users, wherever they are, on a device they even sleep with (their phones) are incredible. And certainly extend beyond providing Java game download links and a pretend radar screensaver.



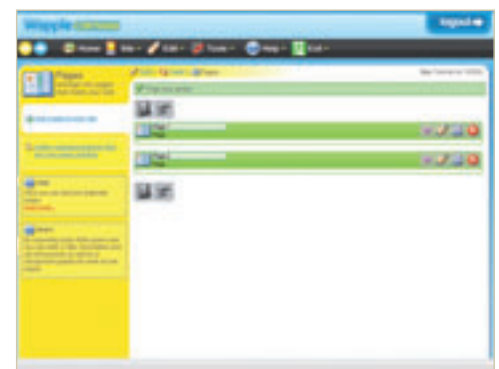
04 Adding text

Go to the Edit>Build>Pages and click on the Edit icon on the Page. Select Text in the Add Chunk drop-down and click the Plus button. Enter the name of the chunk, check Chunk Active and enter the text into Quick Text Override. You can also make your text scroll.



05 Displaying graphics

Select Graphic in the Add Chunk drop-down and click the Plus button. Enter its name, check Chunk Active, choose the scale and select the graphic. Click the Plus to display on your site. Change the order of items by clicking on the chunk, dragging to its new position and clicking Save.



06 Adding more pages

Go to Edit>Build>Pages and click Add a page to your site. Name the page and click the Add button. Then click the Edit button, select Phonecall and click the Add button. Enter the name, check Chunk Active and enter your phone number. This creates a click-to-call button.



You'll also find preformatted mobile templates at sites like <http://dev.mobi/>

“Use the mobile internet to entertain, inform and educate people where it was previously unavailable to them”

Traditionally, this is what we have seen on the mobile internet. A number of people will have collected a Java game from a link in an SMS without realising they have had a mobile internet experience.

Use the mobile internet to reach out to your audience. Use it to entertain, inform and educate people in places where such an experience was previously unavailable. Use the immediacy of the mobile internet to your advantage and that of your visitors.

7) Do not expect the same results across every device

Every make and model of mobile handset is different. In fact, there are even several versions of device firmware out there for most handsets you'll find. Operators even put their own modified version of the firmware onto devices at the same time that they glue their logo onto the front.

If you look very carefully at the same web page in two different web browsers, you might notice some subtle differences in the way that things are displayed on the screen. Across mobile browsers, the differences are simply shocking. Fonts are the biggest culprit due to many devices having several sizes of one font that they can choose from, rather than a proportional typeface that scales precisely to meet the requirement.

Other aspects vary considerably too. Inputs sometimes don't work the same way, with selects sometimes acting more like radios and image links highlighting when selected.

In the end, the clear majority of visitors will only see your website on one device – their own. It is unlikely that users will find themselves comparing cross-browser experiences. That is your job!

8) Test, test, test... and test again!

Accepting that your website will have differences across all the handsets out there, you need to do as much testing as possible. Wapple Canvas can take care of the hard part, which is making sure your website actually loads on all the phones out there. So use your testing time to ensure your site is friendly, accessible, streamlined and rewarding as these are things that only you can determine.

Is your main navigation easily reached or in the way of what matters on each page? Can users find their way about or do you need to add some low-level linking? Are your pages loading quickly, or perhaps you should think about how heavy they are and divide them up.

Ultimately, you can build your website on Wapple Canvas, but you should be continually reviewing your work on a handset. Get into the head of a mobile user – think about who they are, where they are and why they are visiting.

9) Delivering dynamically

Hard-coded websites just do not cut it. It is a fact on web and it is equally true in the mobile space. If you have ever had to place some server-side logic into your website to overcome a shortcoming of a particular browser, you'll appreciate this fact.

Of course, you could create a number of static pages, link them together and launch them to the world, but that really does not impress a mobile audience. Without even considering dynamic content, the first issue encountered will be the requirement to adapt to different devices.

To stand half a chance of achieving the above rules across multiple devices, dynamic websites are the only way to go. This will mean adapting graphics, choosing which mark-up to deliver, working around known device issues, and so forth.

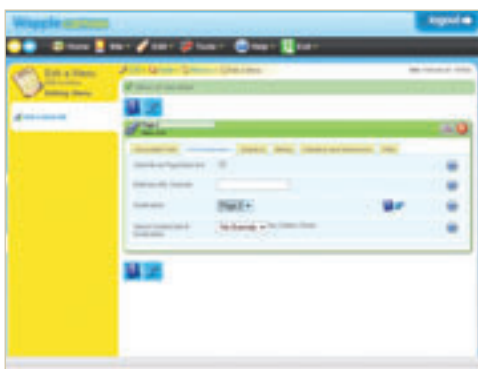
Wapple Canvas profiles every single mobile device and adapts websites based on the capabilities found, chunk by chunk. With this unique technology in place, websites always look their best and always present the optimum experience.

10) Making it worthwhile

Mobile is a unique channel. Use it as such and your visitors will appreciate it.

Just as web provides a great accompaniment to TV shows, marketing campaigns and so on; mobile presents an extension to the whole. Providing exclusive content to mobile users seriously incentivises users to visit. After all, if you were promoting the mobile website of the back of the web presence, why would a user want to hit the mobile site if it is just a small-screen version?

Exclusive experiences and possibilities are even better than content. The ability to use the physical location of the device inside mobile internet websites is one of the most exciting aspects of browsing on a mobile. Information that is dynamically altered based on where a user is at the time can be done on the fixed-line internet, but clearly the usefulness is multiplied tenfold when the browser is itself mobile.



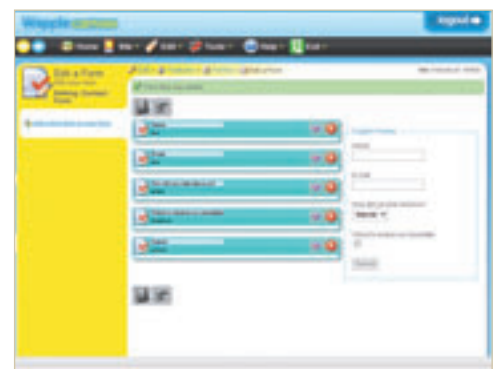
07 Creating a menu

To add a menu, click Edit>Build>Menus. Click Add a menu and name the menu. Click on the Edit button and click Add a menu link. Click the Expand button (purple arrow), select a destination in the Link Destination tab and save. Add a Menu chunk and select the created menu.



08 Styling up your site

To style up your site, go to Edit>Design>Styles. Click on the part of the site you want to style and make changes using the options on the left-hand side. You can change the text size, colour and style, as well as background colours. Don't forget to save your changes.



09 Going to the next level

Use the URLs on Home to check out your site. This tutorial gives you a basic site with styling. This is the tip of the iceberg and you can do much more. Adding other features to your site is easy, so why not try other features such as forms and phonebook chunks.

News»»

TRADE BITES

More women!

ACCORDING TO A new study by the London College of Communications, just 8 per cent of directors behind creative businesses are female. Despite high numbers of women being in designer employment, it seems there is room for more in top roles.

Huxley updated

THOSE LOOKING FOR all sorts of job vacancies across the world can now do it with considerable style after Huxley Associates unveiled a new-look site design. After consulting users from Europe and beyond, the recruitment agency has support for four languages and a classy look that features photos of real employees. "Our aim was to produce a slick and aesthetically pleasing site that our customers will enjoy visiting to help them with their recruitment needs", said Huxley's Marketing Manager Karen O'Leary. Check the new at www.huxley.com now!

Make your CV shine

IT IS THE DOCUMENT WE ALL RELY ON FOR GETTING OUR FOOT IN THE DOOR – BUT DO ANY OF US KNOW THE GOLDEN RULES?

» WHEN IT COMES to applying for creative positions we all seem to get more concerned with compiling our portfolios than anything else. However, more often than not you won't get a chance to showcase an employer your work unless they invite you to interview. This means that your Curriculum Vitae (CV), or 'resume' as the Americans call it, could arguably be more crucial to the job-hunting process. So this month we thought we'd fill this space with a little refresher on the key techniques everyone should know when it comes to making a CV irresistible.

Firstly, let's get the basics out the way and stress the concept of keeping things simple for you and for the employer. A good CV should be concise so it is easy to read and *not* a magnum opus for your life story. Try to keep the pages to at least two but a maximum of three and cut back lengthy details to a series of bullet points that can be expanded and explained at interview. Compose and save it digitally in a popular file format such as Word (.doc) or PDF if you use any fancy formatting and send it with any application forms in a covering email. Very rarely these days do employers expect or want to receive CVs through the post, so be sure to follow any explicit instructions they provide. Keeping things digital also enables employers to quickly forward applications across departments and make multiple prints should they

need it. Lastly, remember that the style of the CV can convey something about your design discipline, so put some thought into how it looks. Less is definitely more so any subtle visual tricks you can add will help to make a CV look less templated and set it apart from the ream of others being submitted:

WEB DESIGNER'S TOP TIP CV HITLIST

- 1) Keep it concise, accessible and easy on the eye.
- 2) Distil information on employment history, academic achievements/qualifications and skills to bulleted lists.
- 3) Don't lie! Be honest about who you are and what you've done or you could end up winning BBC's *The Apprentice*.
- 4) Avoid a heavily templated or unimaginative look. Try to inject some subtle style where possible.
- 5) Save and send it in the most universal document format.
- 6) Submit via email with a covering letter.

If you're still a bit concerned then make sure you let someone else proof it for you – a second opinion never hurts. Additionally, there are some great online guides on CV writing and interviewing at www.greatcv.co.uk, while books such as *Brilliant CV: What Employers Want To See And How To Say It* from Pearson (£9.99) is a great all-encompassing companion.



Recruitment contacts

Hit this quick list of employment specialists for professional advice and job vacancies

NAME	LOCATION	URL	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
Adrem	London	www.adrem.uk.com	020 7562 8282	info@adrem.uk.com
Blue Tree	Surrey	www.bluetreerecruitment.co.uk	020 8399 7908	FORM ONLINE
DesignStudioPeople	London	www.designstudiopeople.com	020 7470 5555	jobs@designstudiopeople.com
Enjoy Creative	Gloucestershire	www.enjoycreativejobs.co.uk	01242 216 276	enquiries@enjoycreativejobs.co.uk
Guru	Kent	www.gurucareers.com	0845 051 0851	FORM ONLINE
Greythorn	London	www.greythorn.co.uk	020 7850 7400	careers@greythorn.co.uk
Hamblyn Selection	London	www.hamblynselection.com	020 7440 1505	k.mcneil@hamblynselection.com
Impact	London	www.impact-london.com	020 7307 6400	enquiries@impact-london.com
MajorPlayers	London	www.majorplayers.co.uk	020 7836 4041	talk@majorplayers.co.uk
Orchard Suits	Leeds/M'chester	www.orchardsuits.co.uk	0161 455 0055	manchester@orchardsuits.co.uk
Purple	London/Leeds	www.purple-consultancy.com	020 7288 6700	futures@purple-consultancy.com
Source	London	www.sourcepersonnel.co.uk	020 3116 0000	info@sourcepersonnel.co.uk



Agency profile

ENJOY CREATIVE IS based in Cheltenham and has a background in recruiting for the marketing, PR, advertising and design industry. With opportunities available on a freelance, contract, or permanent basis, the company is known for dealing with talented clients who have worked for big blue chip firms. The website has various hints and tips for job hunters, plus a database of current vacancies you can search to locate that next move in your dream career.

SHOUT IT OUT

We want to hear from recruitment agencies, design firms and readers on all the latest creative job news: webdesigner@imagine-publishing.co.uk

In association with



Wondering where all the best people have gone?

Check out the Source talent pool.

www.sourcepersonnel.co.uk



YDA Awards 2008

WINNERS SET TO BE ANNOUNCED DURING LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL

» **THE CAPITAL GEARS** up to host another ten days of creative celebration with this year's London Design Festival kicking off on 13 September. Part of the proceedings is of course the YDA Design Awards, which was launched in 2006 to give digital technology rightful coverage within the event. Since 15 August a judging panel, which includes Airside's Nat Hunter and Inbox Creative Director Oli Christie, have been mulling over potential winners to be announced at the awards party on the 17 September. Categories include Interactive, Dynamic and Technology – with previous victors including BBC and Preloaded's CDX (<http://cdx-thegame.com>), Glue London's Get The Message (www.getthessage.net), and TwentysixLondon's Dave Ellis who scooped best young designer. Visit www.ydesignawards.com to find out more...



Let's hope this year throws up some worthy winners of the YDA Awards



STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE



Marc Shelkin – consultant,
Source Recruitment
marc@sourcepersonnel.co.uk

Career ladder and salary survey

MONEY MIGHT NOT BE EVERYTHING, BUT IT HELPS TO KNOW WHAT YOUR JOB'S WORTH

THIS MONTH'S ARTICLE will help you understand the career paths available to you and the recommended salaries attached to those positions. If you are a recent graduate, this will help you focus and give you something to aim for; however, if you are already in the industry as a designer, it will help direct you to the next possible step in your career.

All of the above job titles could include the words digital, web, interactive, new media, online and multimedia. Titles mean different things in different agencies and some agencies don't use all of these titles. Some smaller boutique agencies will use your experience in a different way to a large networked agency.

It's hard to put the number of years' experience required next to each job title as some people can climb the ladder faster than others. I have seen people with three years' experience still at a junior level and I have seen designers with 18 months' experience at a strong mid/w level.

As a rough guide, you can expect to go from a junior designer to a creative director in around eight to ten years. This is eight to ten years of hard work, dedication, interest, long hours and the willingness to learn new skills. Many agencies like SAS Design prefer to hire raw talent and watch them grow by investing time and money in training. Danny Angel joined SAS Design as a junior designer a few years ago and has been loyal to the point where the opportunity landed on his lap to become head of digital creative. In the current market, it's very rare for someone to stay loyal to an agency or company for five years or more. This is down to most of the agencies in London looking to secure new talent with attractive financial offers and responsibilities.

I hope this helps in your quest to find your dream job. If you would like to have a conversation, ask further questions about portfolios, or find out a few more top tips, please contact me at marc@sourcepersonnel.co.uk.

"In the current market, it's very rare for someone to stay loyal to an agency or company for five years or more"

AVERAGE LONDON SALARIES

Below is a common career path for a graduate designer with average London salaries

Digital artworker	£18-£20k
Junior designer	£18-£24k
Mid/w designer	£25-£35k
Senior designer	£35-£45k
Lead designer	£40-£45k
Art director	£38-£48k
Senior art director	£40-£50k
Head of design/art	£50-£60k
Associate creative director	£60-£80k
Creative director	£80-£120k
Executive creative director	£120k+

www.sourcepersonnel.co.uk

Portfolio»»

EVERY MONTH WE showcase and profile the talent of new media and web design hopefuls looking to break into the trade. This time we're proud to exhibit the efforts of **N+R**, **Andre Weier** and **Sam Crisco**. Next issue it could be you!



Currently under development is a site for local interior design company Mirco Design, with plenty more in the pipeline



Bastian and Bowry have also done work as N+R contributing to Inhibition Exhibition

N+R»»

www.finalcrit.com/art/nickplusric

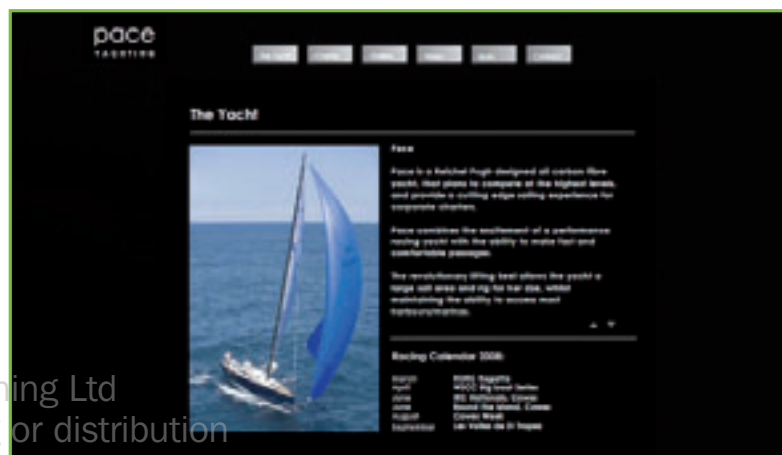
Skills: Photoshop, Illustrator, Flash, After Effects, Premiere, Dreamweaver, InDesign

Employment status: Freelance

N+R is a portfolio from two old university friends, Ricky Bowry and Nick Bastian, who both graduated with degrees from The Arts Institute at Bournemouth. Bowry studied BA (Hons) Illustration while Bastian studied BA (Hons) Graphic Design. Their first paid job was designing the letterheads and business cards for Bowry's father's flooring business. Their combination of skills ensures that they are capable of taking on remits with wider scope. We asked Bowry and Bastian what aspects of being a web designer they enjoyed most. They reliably informed us that, "The best part is the split-second reaction you get when given a new brief. It is the moment when hundreds of ideas and images flood into your mind. This is when you need a pen and paper most. Also, when you have finished a demanding project and you receive good feedback, you know it has been worthwhile." The future looks bright for the boys as they told us, "Without continual innovation, web design will become the creation of a shell to contain information, rather than enhance it".



The site for Pace Yachting is a well-designed affair, with everything easy to use and laid out clearly



Andre Weier »

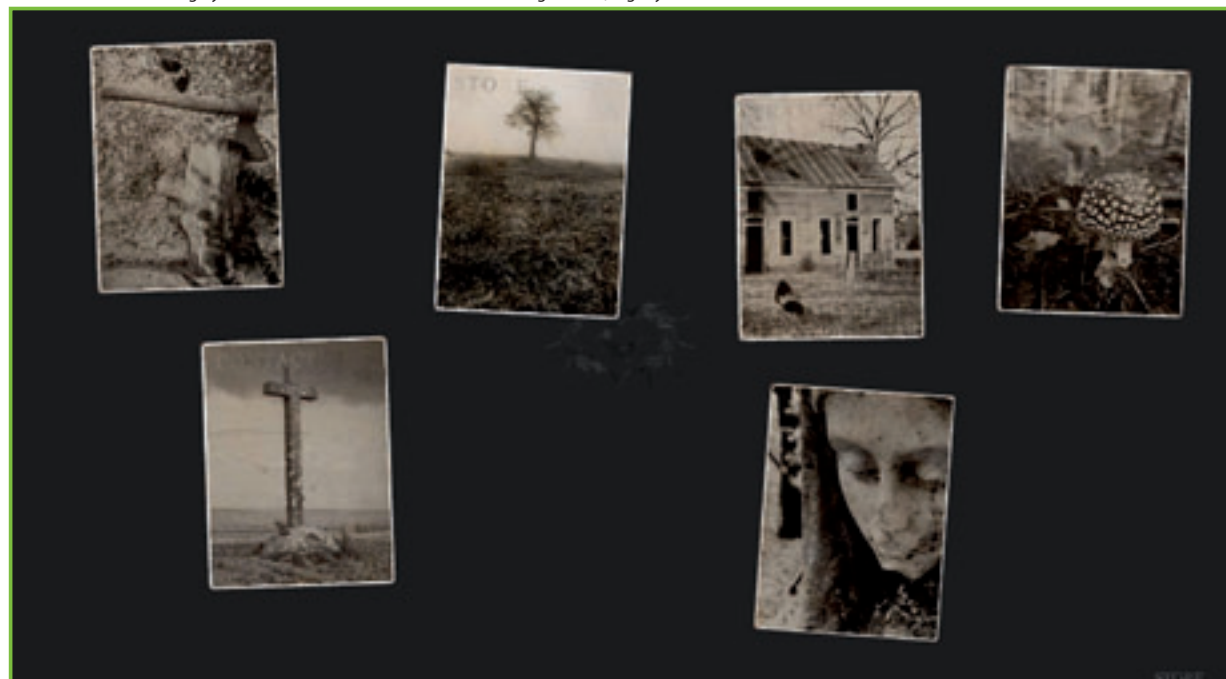
www.nalindesign.com

Skills: Flash, Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Illustrator, ActionScript, HTML, CSS, XML, PHP, JavaScript, SEO, web promotion, marketing

Employment status: Freelance

www.nalindesign.com is the work of Andre Weier, who graduated in 2005 after studying Communication Design for four years at Ruhrakademie in Schwerte (North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany). After graduating, Weier jumped straight in at the deep end and formed NALINDESIGN, and has been working as a freelancer ever since. His work is strongly based in Flash, one of his specialist areas, and he has won a number of awards for his work. These include the American Design Award – 2 x Gold, Creative Website Awards, Pixelmakers Award, Website Design Award and NewWebPick Award – 5/5. Great examples of his dedication to the art of online animation can be found at **www.abandonedclothing.com** and **www.subraumstudio.com**. When it comes to web design, Weier tells us that it's the creative process itself and getting in touch with people from all over the world that he really enjoys. Look out for more of his inspired and inspiring Flash movies as his own site is set for a redesign in the near future.

The black-and-white imagery lends a dark tone to the Abandoned Clothing website, slightly reminiscent of tarot cards



Split navigation is the order of the day in Weier's design for www.malerhimmeldirk.de



Version 01 of www.nalindesign.com incorporated some nifty web design tricks of its own

Neatly laid out, the HTML site version for Subraumstudio is ideal for its architectural content



www.freikirchliche.com
consists of some stunning
visual design work from
the off



Weier has encapsulated the
mood of metal band The
Asura, as they get the gothic
treatment for their site

GET YOUR WORK HERE

This section is designed specifically to give web design hopefuls the chance to shine. If you feel you're good enough to be here, then drop us a line at webdesigner@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Weier has also designed personal portfolio websites,
such as this one below



A mesmerising floating homepage meets you at www.subraumstudio.com, with clever keyboard-based navigation

web designer Creative Careers



The site for the Vine Street Mountain Sun pub is just one of over 40 websites that Crisco has designed

Sam Crisco»

www.digi-pal.com

Skills: Traditional fine art skills, Photoshop, Flash, Dreamweaver, Illustrator, interface design and usability

Employment status: Freelance

Sam Crisco has been in the web design business since 2000 after graduating from the University of Colorado with a degree in Fine Art. After working for a small firm for a year, Crisco decided to take the big step into the world of freelance and created his current company, Digital Palette LLC. As owner and creative director, he enjoys creative design, especially Photoshop layouts, Flash layouts and dabbling in 3D animation. Lately, he has added coding in AS3 to that list, however, the design aspect is his real passion. Digital Palette has an extensive portfolio with a wide variety of subject matter. The following examples are just a couple of snippets from his portfolio: Mountain Sun Pub & Brewery (www.mountainsunpub.com) and piZap (<http://pizap.com>). We asked Crisco what web trends have caught his eye and it seems RIAs are something that he has come to love. He told us, "I think that the trend is going to be Flex/Silverlight/AIR over the next five years, and we will slowly move away from HTML-based layouts".



Crisco's design for the piZap site allows for plenty of fun to be had with photos and associated captions



We may not be too clued up when it comes to make-up, but we recognise a well-designed site when we see one!



In designing the site for Outdoor Craftsmen, a landscaping company, Crisco animated its logo to build up from scratch on the homepage



Lots of impressive Flash and design work is employed on the site for Mopeds Direct



Denver-based Navajo Express is another firm that targeted Digital Palette LLC to design a company website

Q&A >>

UCAS

UCAS

WE SPEAK WITH ELEANOR STEVENS, SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE FOR UCAS, ABOUT WHAT IT DOES AND WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

>> ANYONE WHO APPLIED to university or college from school will remember being nagged to fill out a special form. That document with your proposed course choices and projected grades was then sent to an organisation in charge of processing those applications. For many people this will be the main encounter with UCAS, and the helpful folks who ensure thousands of students are successfully placed in higher education. We were fortunate enough to catch one of them to tell us a little on what UCAS is all about...

ES – Eleanor Stevens, senior communications executive at UCAS

Eleanor is senior communications executive at UCAS. She manages a team of four marketing and communications professionals and works alongside a wider group of people responsible for web development and design. She has worked at UCAS for two years.

WD: To begin, what key roles does UCAS play within higher education in helping students of all ages and backgrounds find the training they need?

ES: UCAS is the central organisation that processes applications to full-time, undergraduate higher education courses in the UK. We process applications for over 500,000 people per year for applicants from the UK and outside. UCAS also processes applications

for graduate teacher training, conservatoires and postgraduate courses through our GTTR, CUKAS and UKPASS systems respectively.

All of the information relating to a person's application to a higher education course can be found at www.ucas.com. 99.9 per cent of all applications are

**ELEANOR STEVENS,
SENIOR
COMMUNICATIONS
EXECUTIVE, UCAS**



now made online using our Apply service, and these applications can then be tracked throughout the year.

WD: UCAS is often perceived to be the only doorway into higher education for those pursuing university – particularly when it comes to applying. Is this true and what advice could you give to those who aren't necessarily straight from school?

ES: Essentially it is true, yes. We currently have about 320 institutions in the UCAS scheme, all of whom are based in the UK and are used to applicants applying to them through UCAS.

There is plenty of information available on www.ucas.com for applicants, whether they are coming from school or are applying on their own having been out of the school system for some years. We know it can be a daunting prospect so we try to make the information as easy and clear to use and understand

as possible. We also have a customer service helpline that people can telephone if they get really stuck. It's 0871 468 0468.

There is also an online community network run by UCAS called yougofurther.co.uk, which is where applicants can talk to other people in the same situation, and perhaps meet people before they actually start their course. There is plenty of help there for people, whether they have the support of their school or not.

WD: For school and college leavers looking to make the best choices for their next academic route, how early should they be looking for the right courses and thinking about submitting UCAS applications?

ES: The main deadline for applications is 15 January of the same year that they're hoping to start the course (usually in September or October). However, there is an earlier deadline of 15 October (the previous year) for those hoping to study medicine, dentistry or veterinary science and applications to Oxford and Cambridge. Therefore, applicants should start to research possible courses in plenty of time before the deadline that is most relevant to them. All of this information is available at www.ucas.com/students/importantdates

WD: Obviously without going into specifics, has UCAS noticed an influx in the amount of applications relating to digital design and new media courses over recent years?

ES: It's difficult to tell – to do a detailed analysis of subjects would take some time. However, you can get an approximate idea of applications from our statistics section of the website: <http://tinyurl.com/ucas-stats>

WD: With courses and places within the top universities as competitive as ever, what kind of emphasis would UCAS place on gaining professional experience and compiling an impressive portfolio of work when it comes to making university applications?

ES: UCAS supports applications from people regardless of whether they have had a break or are applying straight from school. We would advise going to open days and talking to admissions tutors to find out what they think about gaining professional experience.

"We know it can be a daunting prospect so we try to make the information as easy, clear to use and understand as possible"



THIS Month

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eBay, PayPal and Gmail join forces to fight spam

AUCTION GIANT, ONLINE PAYMENT PROVIDER AND GOOGLE'S GMAIL GET TOGETHER TO HELP COMBAT SPAM AND PHISHING FOR BETTER CONSUMER PROTECTION

AUCTION GIANT EBAY and online payment provider PayPal have linked up with Google's Gmail service to provide better protection for consumers. The main objective of the collaboration is to provide protection against the menace of fraudulent emails and phishing attacks. Gmail account holders, who are also current eBay and PayPal customers, will benefit from a safer email experience. The service will ensure that far fewer fake emails will be hitting Gmail inboxes in the future.

The new linkup will provide protection through the use of email authentication technology in the shape of DomainKeys and DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM). Originally developed by Yahoo!, the technology works by embedding a cryptographic signature in the email header. The signature is unique and when an email arrives, the email server will try to verify the signature.

If it matches up, the email is deemed to come from a reputable source and passes through to the inbox. No match means it could well be spam, and it never makes it to the inbox.

Head of Trust and Safety for eBay in the UK, Richard Ambrose said, "Google's commitment to this battle will undoubtedly encourage others to join in the fight to keep consumers safe online." Head of Risk Management at PayPal UK, Garreth Griffith was equally enthused and said, "The Gmail team's decision to work with eBay and PayPal on this issue is a significant step forward in our fight to keep consumers safe from phishing and cybercrime. Today's announcement will enhance online safety for millions of eBay and PayPal customers who use Gmail." Brad Taylor, leader of the Gmail Anti-Spam Team, said, "We're glad to be working with eBay and PayPal to protect our users."



Big boys aren't always bullies! The web's top dogs are protecting their users

New UI to drive mCommerce

HANDY GROUP INTRODUCES ITS ICON-DRIVEN UI FOR TOUCH-SCREEN DEVICES

THE MOBILE WEB is taking great strides in the online arena, and mobile specialist Handy Group recently introduced its new icon-driven interface. The beauty of the UI is that it works in tandem with handsets using touch-screen technology such as the iPhone. According to research, iPhone users access the web 100 times more than any other handset users, making the new UI the perfect path to mCommerce sites. Michael Lacy, CEO of Handy Group, said, "Handy Group's core aim is to provide an outstanding experience for all mobile internet customers. Our technology enables us to identify the phone type and select the best possible user interface for each individual handset. The development of this new solution was vital



The Handy Group's new icon-driven interface is set to drive mCommerce to the mobile-using masses

to ensure consumers receive the best user experience and functionality that's currently available for their handset."

Head online for financial deals

75 PER CENT RESEARCH FINANCIAL SERVICES ONLINE BEFORE BUYING

RECENT RESEARCH BY customer experience benchmarking company Global Reviews has found that 78 per cent of credit card customers research deals online, while 79 per cent of personal loan customers carry out their research online and 56 per cent want to be able to apply online. The research also indicated that 53 per cent of consumers say that they research their home insurance online, with 47 per cent stating that they are extremely likely to purchase through the internet in the future.

Global Reviews' director Adam Goodvach said, "Customers are increasingly going online to research and buy financial products. However, our research found that customers who do not find what they are looking for will vote with their feet."



Research found that the customer experience on many sites could still be significantly improved



Tutorial :: eCommerce

Affiliate Window

The screenshot displays the 'affiliatewindow' administration interface. The top navigation bar includes 'My account', 'News', 'Log out', and 'Contact'. The main header shows the date '01:08am 25th Jul 2008' and the user 'Morning Ellie', along with account statistics: 'ID: 69455' and 'Month's Earnings: £8.00'. The left sidebar contains links for 'My account', 'ShopWindow', and 'Content Widgets'. The main content area is titled 'Content Widgets' and features a progress bar with steps: 'Choose Template', 'Add Products', 'Customise Template', 'Name & Save', and 'Get Code'. The current step is 'Step 1: Choosing a Template', which instructs the user to select a template by clicking on an image. Below this, there are filters for 'Refine By' (Size, Offers, Theme) and a grid of template thumbnails. The thumbnails are categorized by 'All', 'Standard', 'My Branded', 'Merchant Branded', and 'Themed'. The 'Themed' category is selected, showing six templates with dimensions and offer counts: 'Shop: 120 x 240 (1 offer)', 'Shop: 468 x 90 (2 offers)', 'Shop: 120 x 600 (4 offers)', 'Shop: 600 x 520 (12 offers)', 'Shop: 250 x 250 (2 offers)', and 'Shop: 300 x 600 (3 offers)'. The right sidebar contains sections for 'My account' (Account Management, News, Linking Methods, ShopWindow Toolset, Web Services, Support, Update Account Details, Log out), 'Reports' (Merchant Performance, Performance Over Time, Link Performance, Commission Details, Click Ref Report, Payment History), and 'Payment History'.

THE BRIEF

ON THE CD

Tutorial files:
Guidelines for creating themed widgets (PDF)

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE

How to earn money from your site by displaying links to retailers' websites

TIME REQUIRED

30 minutes

SKILL LEVEL



Earn money from your web traffic with widgets

INTERNET RETAILERS WANT TO ENGAGE WEB DESIGNERS IN AFFILIATE MARKETING. IN THIS TUTORIAL, CREATE SOME BESPOKE AFFILIATE LINKS

AFFILIATE MARKETING HAS become a very popular way for website owners to monetise their traffic. This is probably due to the fact that becoming an affiliate is very easy, very low cost and can be very lucrative.

This tutorial will show you how to set yourself up as an affiliate and then demonstrate how you can create bespoke affiliate links called Content widgets that can be deployed in any web environment you choose.

There are some basic concepts that you should be clear on before you embark on becoming an affiliate. First of all, online retailers are companies who sell products via the internet, such as www.iwantoneofthose.com.

Second of all, traffic sent to the retailer's website via affiliate links is tracked, usually by an affiliate network. Referrals that result in a purchase earn the affiliate a percentage of the sale. This model is commonly called cost per acquisition (CPA).



YOUR EXPERT

David Hall is communications director at Affiliate Window. He speaks regularly at industry events about how to improve ROI and achieve customer loyalty, and also delivers training about affiliate marketing for the Institute of Direct Marketing.

Earn money from your web traffic with widgets



01 Getting started

To use ContentWindow widgets, you need to log in to Affiliate Window. Those new to the network should look at the final three steps where you will find an exclusive invitation code for *Web Designer* readers, a guide to the setup process and an overview of the administration area.



02 Create a data set

When you click on the Content Widgets heading in the main navigation, you'll be asked to adhere to a set of terms and conditions. This will begin a setup process to build a unique data set of tracking reference code to record the customer actions on which affiliate marketing relies.



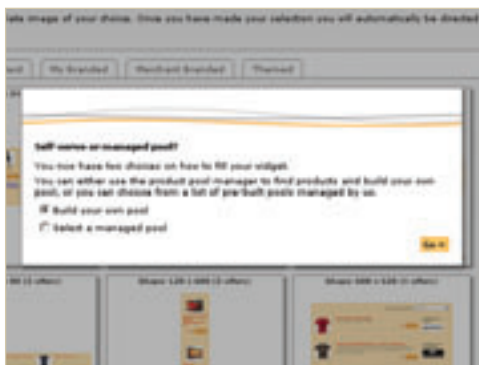
03 New Content Widget

With the data set created, you will now always come through to this screen when you click on the Content Widgets link. Next, follow the link in the top right entitled New Content Widget; you haven't created any widgets to list yet for us to worry about that link.



04 Select a widget template

There are eight different-sized widgets across a wide variety of themes. Navigate via the tabs and refine by elements, then click the image for your first widget. In this exercise, we will create a 250 x 250 widget and utilise a predesigned template themed 'music'.



05 Managed or self-selected?

If you want your widget to be updated by a third party, then you ought to choose Select a managed pool. In this instance, we want to play with all the functionality and choose specific products, so you should opt to Build your own pool of products.



06 Keyword product search

The database of products available to populate your widgets exceeds four million. To find items to add to your widget, type a word or phrase into the search box and review the results. Your search can be refined, revised or replaced until you get the perfect set of products.



07 The product pool

Individual items from your search results can be added to your Widget Product Pool; either drag and drop the item or click on the + symbol. The pale green background indicates the number of items needed to fill the widget. This example requires a minimum of two products.



08 Give it a name

In time you will create many widgets. Naming them means you can identify them all in the future. If you run several sites, then the Click Ref enables you to use your own index to keep tabs on which widgets are generating the most traffic and/or the most sales.



09 Pick up the code

With your content widget populated, you are ready to put it into a web environment. The code is available as a JavaScript or PHP included file and can be used straight away or obtained at a later date via the List Content Widgets button.

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10 Put it live!

The code can be copied from the content widget Admin Area into blogs, forums, emails, websites – in fact, any digital space. A blog has perhaps become the most common way for even low-tech people to maintain active web space and has been used for this example.



11 Check out my widget

People who view the post, click through to the retailer website and buy something will earn the widget owner a commission. This is affiliate marketing, which has become a very popular way for companies to generate customers through the internet.



12 Statistics

Next we'll look at how the interface will help you manage your widgets. The screen highlights one widget named 'a widget demo'. All the widgets listed have performance statistics that can be viewed by clicking in the Reports box in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen.



13 All your widgets

The List Content Widgets button brings up the screen shown in the screenshot above. From here, you can edit all the items in a widget's product pool, rename it and copy the code to deploy it on a website/page or you can delete it completely.



14 Managed widgets

In Step five, we chose to self-select the items for the product pool, however, there are a growing number of managed widgets where the product pool is updated by a third party. This is useful if you want to host on an active part of your site without reviewing the content yourself.



15 Merchant branded

Many merchants these days have their own designers or agencies who supply widgets designed with their business firmly in mind. As expected, merchant-branded widgets are locked to display only those products from that particular retailer.



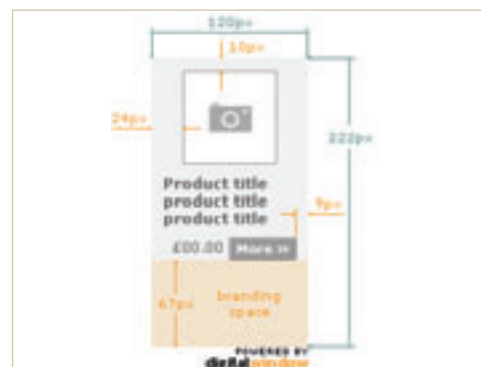
16 Standard widgets

The nine sizes of a standard widget have a unique set of additional design options. The main feature is that every element of the widget can be coloured to meet your website's needs. Simply click on any colour swatch on the left and enter the hexadecimal colour code.



17 Personalising widgets

Colour palettes can be created, saved and applied to your widgets. You can also select which element of information are displayed and how the user is redirected after clicking on your widget. To view these options, you should click More Options beneath the Colours box.



18 Widget background

The background of a widget can contain your own design, be sent to us and uploaded into your affiliate account. The concept is similar to the branded widgets, except that you will be the only person with access to the design. The disc contains a PDF with all the specifications you'll need.



19 Your own design

If your design features a border or design detail surrounding the content, special attention should be paid to the dimensions given between the content space and widget edges. The content is made much clearer and visibly satisfying by allowing three pixels of padding.



20 Rounded edges

When designing a background with a rounded corner, be sure to supply the file as a GIF or PNG with transparency. When supplying a GIF with alpha transparency, be aware that the matte colour will affect how the widget appears on different-coloured backgrounds.



21 Sign up

Affiliates earn money for successful promotions. You need to be fully registered with Affiliate Window to access the software and reporting. This is a two-minute process that you can start by clicking the Become an affiliate button on the homepage.

IN DETAIL

Add advanced functionality to your site

ShopWindow Client Software enables you to add product-comparison functionality to a website. While the initial download will only take a few minutes, the time and effort you put into the design will make the difference

DO YOU WANT a bit more of a challenge? Would you like to add complete product-comparison functionality to one or more of your websites in a look and feel that complements your website perfectly? If yes, then ShopWindow Client Software might be the answer. Access to this very innovative software comes alongside Content widgets and is free. It simply requires a little more time and a little more integration.

Your first port of call is the Client Software download page, found by clicking the Client Software link on the right in your Affiliate Administration area. Here, you can download the files to operate your ShopWindow. After downloading the files, you can deploy them onto your website via an FTP client. If you do this without making any edits, you should see a version identical to the picture ShopWindow Client, the default look and feel.

ShopWindow Client is a white-label (almost literally) version of www.shopwindow.com and has three main elements to it:

- Search box
- Category tree
- Hot picks

There are also two more additional display units (elements) showing Popular Searches and a Retailer Map. It is your choice whether to include these elements or not in your final design.

After downloading the files you should note that there are only some files will require your attention. Within the main data (constants.inc.php) file, you can select which categories you want to call data from (for example, music or men's clothes), as well as a whole host of other edits including the above-mentioned elements and calling your bespoke design templates.

In the second image, you can see a collage design with some magnet-style lettering. This example of ShopWindow

was inspired by the movie *Be Kind Rewind* directed by Michel Gondry and the designer's fascination for 'sweding'. It is a great example of how unique your version of ShopWindow could be. An additional example themed around videogaming can be seen at <http://arcade.shopwindow.com>. These designs are created by the manipulation of Smarty templates, and a good knowledge of the Smarty Template Engine will come in very handy but is not essential as the accompanying CSS style sheet will allow you to enhance your integration beyond the standard design.



ShopWindow Client: the default look and feel of the software before any personalisation has been made



ShopWindow with a collage theme: created by a designer obsessed by Michel Gondry



22 Web Designer invitation

We are offering all *Web Designer* readers the opportunity to register on the network without paying the registration fee. Simply enter the words "love design" into the invitation code box on the third sign-up screen. This code will be active through the whole of September.



23 Your new account

We will approve all *Web Designer* readers' applications very quickly, so you can begin to create ContentWindow widgets. If you are feeling adventurous, download the ShopWindow client software and begin to design your own product-comparison site.





POSTCARDS FROM A PROJECT

AGENCY ZOLV TELLS ALL ON BUILDING THE NEW TRAVEL.CO.UK



Zolv's managing director Olly Wenn and his team relished the challenge the project posed

THE WEB HAS revolutionised certain eCommerce sectors so much that we often forget how we managed before it. Holiday and travel is one market where being able to jump online and scour hundreds of packages, then make a booking instantly is almost invaluable to modern punters. But who are the people behind these convenient eCommerce solutions, and what kinds of challenges do they present? It is an area of web design that is glamorously unglamorous, although we were delighted when the team behind the new **travel.co.uk** website agreed to describe how they landed such a project and why they are so proud of it...

OW: Olly Wenn, managing director

AH: Alex Hill, developer

ID: Iain Davidson, designer

WD: To give some background on Zolv, what is it that defines you as an agency and why are you so synonymous with site solutions in the travel sector?

OW: We've been working within the online travel sector for more than a decade. I developed the first interactive CD-ROM holiday brochures for tour operators such as Virgin Holidays and Eurocamp over 13 years ago. CD-ROM development gave way to the web in 1998 when we created our first travel website for Virgin Holidays. In 2001, I started up Zolv with the intention of focusing purely on web development; by 2005, we were named as one of Deloitte's Rising Stars. Since then, our portfolio has grown through personal recommendations – without exception. By delivering what we promise, we have managed to build strong relationships with key players in the travel industry, and as these people have moved around, they've recommended us to other businesses. I believe it is this pedigree of long-standing relationships, as well as our breadth and depth of experience, which sets us apart from other agencies.

We remain Virgin Holidays' primary web design and development partner, and over the

“We are very aware of data privacy... we’ve built a secure system that customers can trust, which is also simple to use”

years we have won other significant accounts in the online travel market, such as Teletext Holidays, InLuxury and most recently, **travel.co.uk** (TCU).

WD: How did Zolv get involved with travel.co.uk?

OW: As with all our work, it was through personal recommendation. We have worked with Ray Mason, the MD of **travel.co.uk** before, and Ray and I discussed the possibility of **travel.co.uk** for some time before it got the green light from the backers, so Zolv was in the frame from the outset. The whole idea really appealed to us, and we instantly recognised that it was a unique opportunity to build something really special from scratch. There was no existing brand, no legacy code and it was a very open brief. **Travel.co.uk** was really excited about the ideas we were bringing to them, and after a highly productive creative session, we were hired.

WD: When developing the travel.co.uk website, what were the primary objectives for the finished site?

OW: The main objective was to build a B2C portal on top of Comtec’s holiday search-and-booking engine. The idea was to allow the customer to find, compare and book, all in one place where the price they see is the price they pay. These things would differentiate TCU from other sites in the holiday-comparison space today. Operationally, we had another objective as TCU consists of just three people so the site had to be low maintenance. We had to deliver an administration and content management solution that almost ran itself.

AH: It became clear in the early design phase that what we were going to build was a set of web tools that allowed the customer to search, save and sift through millions of potential holidays. The rationale was that with the rise in popularity of apps such as web mail, Facebook and Flickr, web users are becoming increasingly comfortable with actively using the web rather than passively browsing it. So when we set out to design and build TCU, we were thinking in terms of an application, not a brochure.

ID: That’s not to say we didn’t spend much time on the web design. If the site is simple to use and looks great, we believe customers will be more likely to book a holiday – which is obviously the ultimate goal for TCU. There was considerable focus on functional design and the usability of the application. For us, design is always about the customer experience. There

is an argument that the best user experience results from making everything as simple as possible. However, we do ask a little more of the customer than just to browse, point and click. It is too easy to underestimate the end user’s abilities and design to the lowest common denominator; we believe that customers will happily invest a little time with a process that gives them what they want. This is what constitutes a good user experience – one that engages and delivers results.

WD: What was the brief from the client and how did this shape the development of the site – did they play an active role?

OW: The brief was initially of quite a high level. It listed a number of third-party suppliers that we had to work with, providing brochure content, weather, ratings, call-centre functionality and so on. Other than these specific integrations, the brief was to design, build and deliver a holiday comparison site, and to put a lot of thought into some kind of filter, shortlist and comparison functionality. Everything else you now see was an output of our design process. So the brief didn’t really shape the site, the end site came from collaboration with the client.

ID: Over the years we’ve established a design process that works really well. We place a lot of emphasis on leading with functional design rather than visual design. We focus on what is technically possible, developing a functional, and most importantly, usable interface before we work on a visual style to complement this. We take the same approach regardless of scale; from the development of a date-entry widget at one end to an entire eCommerce site with multipage booking flow at the other.

We always have a discovery phase with the client and our technical guys to develop initial ideas that shape the functionality of a site. **travel.co.uk** was no different – we were all working together from the start of the project. Our design process is iterative and has scheduled check points with regular updates and feedback sessions. All of our clients respond really well to this; we work with them to be creative and really think about what it is they want. All the elements of the site are paper prototyped and then argued and reasoned, giving us an ideal starting point for development.

AH: In addition to the design process, and as part of an Agile approach to software development, we use continuous build and integration, which publishes a nightly snapshot of the build. Our client can see and play with

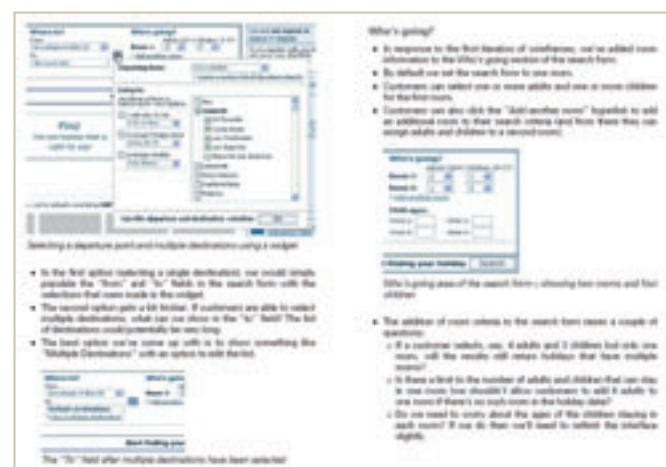
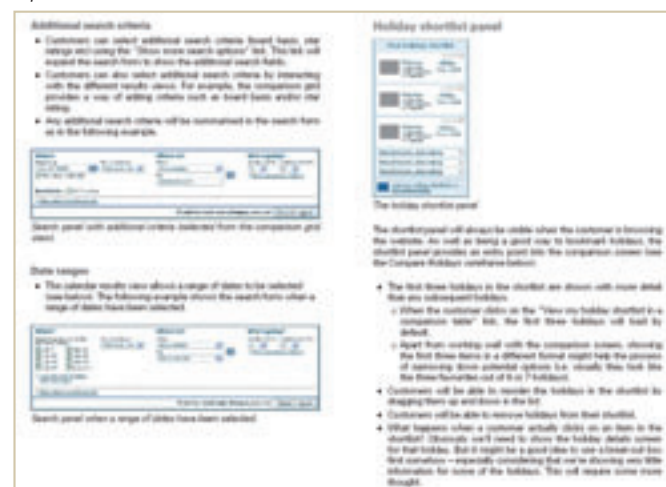
the site as it is built, and we encourage early testing and feedback on site features. Getting good feedback early is a real boost to the team. Getting bad feedback early gives us more time to get it right before we deliver! We think this has really helped us to deliver a tight, feature-rich website that everyone is really pleased with.

WD: What do you think are the golden rules behind designing a modern eCommerce web presence, and which of these are embodied by travel.co.uk?

OW: For me, the main rule is to challenge everything in context and start from your first principles. Don’t just follow other people’s rules; if we all did that, there would be no innovation and we’d still be thinking of the web as a hyperlinked document repository. I think it’s better to understand the reasoning behind a rule of thumb, such as ‘eCom checkout pages should be no longer than three pages’ and make sure that the assumptions that lead to that rule apply to your particular situation.

ID: A travel site that offers car hire, room upgrades, flight upgrades, special requests, medical condition declarations, excursion

These examples of early design documents describe possible interface solutions as well as identifying the various data-handling requirements encountered



eCommerce



Such a data-intensive project obviously presents various concerns for keeping loading times minimal



A graphic mock-up of the calendar component used for displaying queried holidays

“If the site is simple to use and looks great, we believe customers will be more likely to book a holiday”

tickets, passenger details and payment as part of the checkout process is likely to fail on many usability counts if the designer tried to cram all of that into three pages. That said, rule of thumb is a starting point, but if there is good reason to deviate from these, then do so.

OW: For TCU, we decided to examine every piece of the site in detail rather than follow the rules... and we still ended up with a three-page checkout. Make of that what you will!

WD: The site clearly utilises connectivity with various back-end data sources. What specific challenges did this present within the site's design?

ID: Third-party content always presents a challenge for a designer. For example, when we designed the current site for Teletext Holidays (TTH) where advertising fills more than 50 per cent of the homepage, we decided to go for a bold application of the TTH brand colours to establish Teletext's identity against the constantly changing adverts. For TCU, we don't carry third-party adverts and as all third-party content is served to us as XML data without mark-up, we have much more control over how it is displayed on the site. This means we haven't had to force the host brand so much and we have been able to highlight the usable elements of the interface to a greater extent.

OW: The biggest technical challenge we faced in pulling content from numerous sources was maintaining an acceptable page load time. A results page contains 20 hotels, each with content from several different web services. Getting all of that data back before rendering a page resulted in unacceptable latency, and so we developed an Ajax-based cache control, which allows us to do what we call 'deferred rendering'. The body of the page is served to the browser immediately, while the third-party content is being requested. The third-party content is then sent to the browser and slotted into place as it becomes available. We use this technique a lot on TCU.

WD: With data coming from a range of external sources, what techniques were implemented to ensure that pages were search-engine friendly?

ID: Again, having total control over the rendering of the external content is key. We can then make sure that the semantic mark-up is correct. There is a large library of destination content and travel articles on the site as well. This content, while sourced externally, is actually managed in the CMS that we built for the site, so we have a lot of control over that as well.

OW: We also have a set of tools to enable us to create pages containing holiday ideas and

suggestions such as 'last-minute family holidays to Greece', which provide deep links into pages of highly relevant search results – with this, we are attempting to target the long-tail.

WD: There is a distinct lack of Flash throughout the site, and more emphasis on Web 2.0 technologies like Ajax. Was this a conscious decision and why?

AH: Flash – when used correctly – is an amazing asset to any site. Flash works really well as a marketing tool, but that's not what we were building. There was no real need to use Flash on this site, other than to deliver some video – another thing that Flash does really well. From our original designs, we could see that there was large amount of information that needed to be presented to the user in real-time. There are numerous data sources and Ajax allows us to instantly present the user with initial internal information, but then show useful, related information as and when it arrives back from external sources.

WD: What obligations regarding security of transactions and privacy of customer data did you have within this project?

OW: Security is of the upmost importance, particularly now that there is constant media attention on data loss, phishing and other security threats. As with all online transactions, booking a holiday is completed using SSL encryption. Obviously, customers' details are kept securely and used only when necessary during the booking process. We are very aware of data privacy and the issues that surround this. We've built a secure system that customers can trust and that is simple to use.



Don't just look, pay them a visit! This little visual list of influential menu designs was brought to you in association with...

01. www.apple.com 02. <http://2009.ater.com.br/> 03. www.dquinn.net 04. www.o2.co.uk 05. www.bestgrafiks.com 06. <http://euqueru.net/> 07. www.high-street-signs.co.uk
 08. www.weheartstuff.co.uk 09. www.mvhmedia.com 10. www.natl.tv 11. www.sofamade.com 12. www.shoesaddict.fr 13. www.nymoon.com 14. www.restoration-church.com
 15. www.skype.com 16. www.davidesavelli.it 17. <http://studioracket.org/> 18. www.webdesignerwall.com 19. www.zinaz.nl 20. www.timesonline.co.uk



Why navigation still counts

Trenton Moss

Director, Webcredible.co.uk

IN KEEPING WITH our navigation theme this month we managed to speak with usability and accessibility expert Trenton Moss, to get his views on why great site navigation pays dividends universally – not just when it comes to eBusiness...

Web Designer: Experimental website design was once the preserve of new media designers' personal websites, but there seems to have been an erosion of importance placed on effective site navigation in modern design. Would you agree?

Trenton Moss: Very much disagree! An emphasis on search engine optimisation (SEO) and usability has meant that site navigation has been getting better and better. Website owners are using keyword research tools and conducting research with users to find out how navigation should be designed and structured.

WD: With the accessibility regulations now in force and a move to more experimental design, can the two be reconciled?

TM: Very easily, provided you know what you're doing! It's possible to make almost any design/interaction accessible if you work with someone that understands the specific needs of disabled web users. Long gone are the days of checking boxes next to guidelines; now, it's down to having an understanding of the specific needs of disabled users (blind, partially sighted, motor impaired and so on) and making complex navigation designs also work for these users. For example, many auto-suggest dropdowns, eg: www.kayak.co.uk, work for keyboard-only users; some websites provide

an alternative for a drag-and-drop slider, for example: www.amazon.com/gp/gsl/search/finder.

WD: Do you think that the so-called 'rules' of good website interface design can now be broken because web users are now more savvy to navigation online?

TM: Generally, gradual progression works – major change from the norm doesn't. Innovative user interface designs are regularly accepted (eg: the drag-and-drop sliders) but only because users are familiar with this interaction through some other activity offline. When designing a car, you'll always put the steering wheel, pedals, doors, gear stick etc. in the same place – once you've conformed to the basic car design guidelines you can, to some extent, do whatever you want! The same is true for designing user interfaces and navigation – online information-seeking behaviour remains the same as ten years ago and will be the same in ten years' time.

WD: How has the movement away from static pages to Flash GUIs and RIA interfaces changed the way we should view navigation?

TM: It represents a total change as traditional navigation hierarchies are no longer effective in many instances. This is especially true when there's a very large amount of information, which makes it difficult for users to find what they're looking for through a traditional navigation structure.

Information can be placed into multiple categories, which isn't possible with a traditional hierarchical navigation. As a result, running a search and browsing by tagged non-hierarchical topics is increasingly

important. This should therefore be reflected in the page design.

WD: The web is now an accepted place to look for information and shop. Clearly how a website is designed has a lot to do with its success. Do you think we now know the DNA of good website interface design – particularly as this relates to the interfaces we now build that seem like a million miles from those designed at the dawn of the worldwide web?

TM: As per point three, the most successful websites are still using the same guiding principles, so yes, we do know the DNA of good interface design. They're slowly but surely pushing the boundaries of these as we gradually develop over time.

WD: If someone asked you to name and shame some real world examples - could you suggest a website that you think has good navigation and one that is not as easy to navigate?

TM: BBC Sport (good) and Sky Sports (bad).

WD: The humble hyperlink enabled people for the first time to access information in a non-linear way, having been used to book indexes and like. Do you think this ability to understand information in this way has enabled web designers to be more adventurous with their designs, or is there something else going on?

TM: Users still generally think in hierarchical terms, so most sites would be foolish not to follow a structure based on this. That said, as per point four, non-hierarchical tagged topics can work in some instances.

"INNOVATIVE USER INTERFACE DESIGNS ARE REGULARLY ACCEPTED BUT ONLY BECAUSE USERS ARE FAMILIAR WITH THIS INTERACTION THROUGH ANOTHER ACTIVITY OFFLINE"

eCommerce gallery

The ongoing argument continues to rage between the merits of shopping online (it's cheaper) or on the high street (for the experience). So when a website like Crumpler turns up, it's bound to turn heads

Crumpler

www.crumpler.com.au

EVERY NOW AND again, even these days you may happen across a website that manages or attempts to do things differently. Why bother with a flat photo gallery when you can wrap images on a rotating 3D cube, or substitute a bog-standard video control with a virtual VCR machine? It's all about thinking outside the box and being inventive. This is Crumpler's biggest feat and demonstrates a certain amount of imagination within the eCommerce design stratosphere.

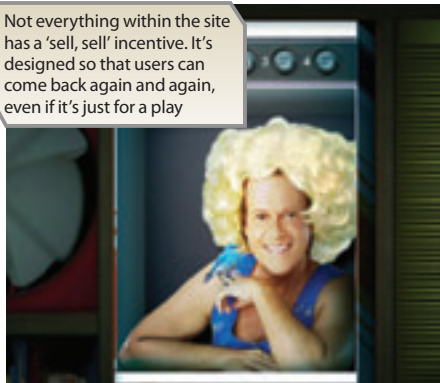
What you end up with here then is a homage to the vending machine, and an ironic celebration of the depersonalisation normally associated with buying and selling. Perhaps reinforcing the convenience of Crumpler handbags, the Flash-based store spits out selected products with believable charm and extends the button-jabbing experience to colour, style and quantity selections. The main dispenser nicely works a search bar and content filter into its retro wood-panelled cabinet along with authentic vintage displays, although the real joy here is arguably the stacked-up pile of mechanics it resides within. You see, the Crumpler store sits within a jumbled-up slew of slot machines that provide additional product or service advice in a refreshingly silly and irreverent way – a rarity among typically pompous fashion brands. Where else could you find fitness coach Richard Simmons smirking in a cooler box sporting various wigs? The point is, this effort from Melbourne-based agency Reactive turns shopping into an adventure, and a little closer in terms of fun as you might hope for on the high street.

We should also say that on a navigational level, given our cover focus, the site does a decent job of floating the user around the stage via an overlay of arrows and back-out buttons. Not accessible in the traditional sense certainly, but keep an eye out for the reassuring padlock in the browser corner for those less trusting.

Navigation is entirely dictated by the user. Whether you want to zoom out to take in everything or have an in-depth look, the choice is yours



Not everything within the site has a 'sell, sell' incentive. It's designed so that users can come back again and again, even if it's just for a play



The homepage that greets you shows bags on shelves exactly as they would be displayed in a typical high-street store

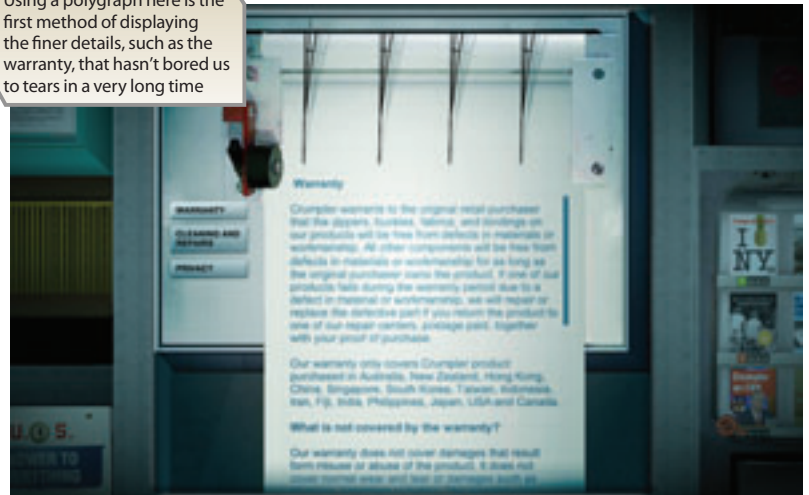


In keeping with the overall vending machine impression, each option is styled realistically as a clearly labelled, chunky button

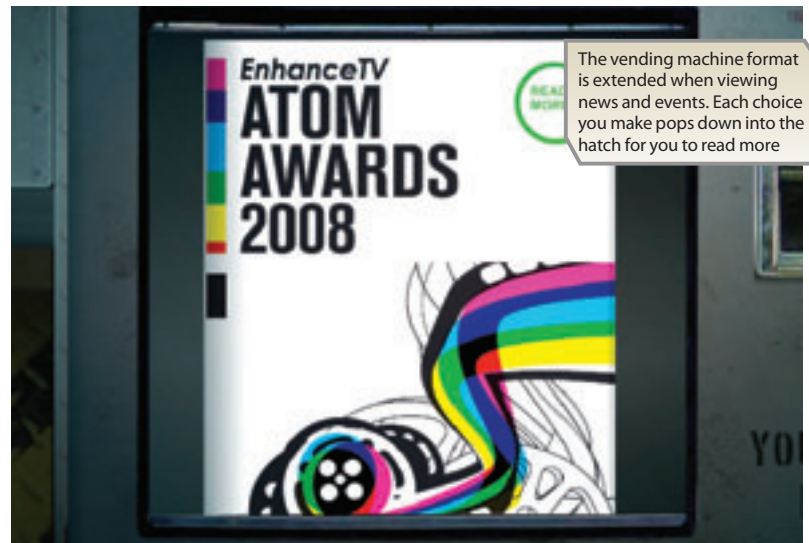


“The Crumpler store provides additional product or service advice in a refreshingly silly and irreverent way”

Using a polygraph here is the first method of displaying the finer details, such as the warranty, that hasn't bored us to tears in a very long time



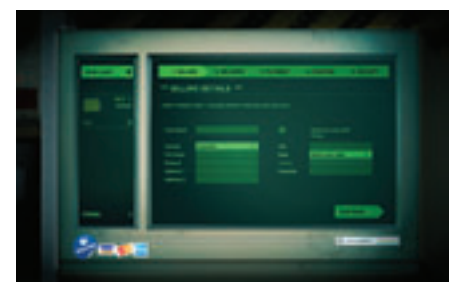
In navigation, everything is so simple to understand, such as these levers dictating what you would like to be sent from the mailing list



The vending machine format is extended when viewing news and events. Each choice you make pops down into the hatch for you to read more



The site is not only refreshing on a consumer level, but also for web designers and developers, as nothing is stale and everything is innovative



VERDICT Crumpler

In an online retail market that is always striving for something new and engaging, we think Crumpler does a top job without compromising safety. Whether the novelty will quickly wear off for returning customers on slower connections is debatable, but full marks for concept execution in a charming way.