

Foreword

It seems like just yesterday that we had released FreeHand 8 and invited a group of Advisory board members to come to the Digital Arts Group of Macromedia's offices to celebrate the release and brainstorm some new ideas that were being bantered about at DAG. We loaded onto a bus and were taken to the small Texas town of Ponder, known mainly as the scene of one of Bonnie and Clyde's bank robberies (also the home of the Ponder Steakhouse, where we were served the most enormous cut of beef I've ever seen on one plate).

A group of FreeHand engineers and Quality Assurance team members met that week to hash out some ideas for a new product—code-named “Monkeyboy” after the famous line uttered by a fledgling John Lithgow in the cult movie *Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*—that would utilize the best of vector and bitmap technology to create graphics for the Web. Ideas were discussed for a way to use a vector editing tool to produce GIF, JPEG, and PNG files that were highly optimized for web publishing. This concept was born out of many hours of discussion with web designers who were forced to use one product to create vector artwork; another for bitmap art, where the vector art was usually converted and composited with the bitmap art; and another program to optimize the saved images. Then the HTML would have to be hand coded or developed in an HTML editor and posted to a site. This cumbersome process resulted in major frustrations for the designer when changes had to be made

because this meant the whole process would have to be started over from scratch, or at least from a group of base files from which the images had been created.

Fireworks, as this new product was dubbed, would combine the core vector editing features found in FreeHand with some of the paint capabilities found in many bitmap editing programs. It would enable bitmap pixels to be rendered to vector paths, making the edit/client approval/change request/re-edit process less of a headache for all involved. We soon adapted the slogan “Always editable all the time.” In addition to the hybrid vector/bitmap editing capabilities, there would also be the ability to optimize the images for web graphics, create sliced tables, enable JavaScript rollovers and image maps, and generate compact HTML along with the exported images.

Since those early days, we’ve listened to the ideas of our customers, advisory board, and beta testers to develop Fireworks into the product that you have today. Much of the input we get has been from reading posts on the Fireworks Online Forum, a newsgroup that has been invaluable to us in learning how our users perceive the product and how they use (and sometimes misuse) the product. This forum has developed into a diverse community of helpful individuals who have served to encourage, educate, and inform those who read or post to the forum. Many of the regulars who post there are also involved in our advisory and beta programs, helping us to shape the product into what you have before you today: Fireworks MX—an approachable, creative, and interactive application that meets all of your web and screen graphics needs in one easy-to-use package.

Kim Cavanaugh appeared on the Fireworks Online Forum shortly after the release of Fireworks 4, having just written *Dreamweaver 4 Fireworks 4 Studio: A Beginner's Guide*. Reading his posts, I detected a familiar ring that brought me back to the days when I was a teacher, poring over materials for my classes to develop year-to-year curricula, defining scope and sequence, breaking each step in the learning process down to its most simple form, and writing those never-ending daily lesson plans. Having posted over 2,100 replies and answers to questions on the Fireworks Online Forum, Kim demonstrated the ability to “put the cookies on the lowest shelf,” as we used to say—making difficult concepts understandable, meeting the questioner at the appropriate level, and exhibiting patience with even the stickiest questions. This comes from Kim’s experience in both developing curricula and working directly with students in the classroom.

This book will take you through Fireworks MX in a deliberate, no-nonsense way to build your knowledge and skill with the software, just as you would

learn any other skill: gaining the concepts, walking through the steps to get your hands around how to do things, and then putting the theory into practice as you build on what you already know. If you are just starting out with Fireworks and need this kind of comprehensive curriculum, training, and guidance; or if you are a teacher and you need a textbook for a Fireworks course, this book is for you.

Enthusiastically,
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Macromedia Customer Care