

## NEWSLETTER OF THE Metropolitan New York Macintosh Alliance

# Creating Magic on the Mac

A Review of ZBrush v1.23

By Li Bendet



3D circle has been chosen with sample of material that comes with ZBrush wrapped automatically around object.

“a must-try application for those who want to explore 3D”



3D circle is now carved into by available tools, and rotated.



3D circle is further carved by subtraction tool and rotated.

### IN THIS ISSUE:

1, 2, 3 Creating Magic on the Mac

4 Computer Connections

5 President's Pen



Further modifications. Material has conformed to modified 3D shape, instantaneously.

## The Thrill of the New

**I**t's hard to recapture the sense of excitement of one's first Macworld Expo, but the discovery of a truly great new product can do it. For me it happened at the 2000 Expo, when I saw a demonstration of the Mac version of Pixologic's "ZBrush" paint program. As a high-end retoucher who had always wanted to try 3D programs, I thought ZBrush might be just the answer to my needs. It was.

Pixelogic had created a wonderful, very intuitive paint program for working in 2D, 2.5D and 3D space. ("2.5D" means *low relief*, like an impasto painting, or a medallion). As the user paints with various brushes and shapes, a sense of solidity—of depth—is created automatically. The light source can be easily adjusted. The program also allows 3D objects to be rotated and "sculpted" *in real time*. This is made possible by the

**"paint directly on the screen and [instantly] see what you've created"**

implementation of what the programmers call "smart pixels", which allows the user to modify a 3D shape and instantly see the result. It all makes for a very dynamic creative experience, without resorting to wireframes, splines, lathing or the other mechanisms of traditional 3D modelling. The program is a treat even for those with no 3D program experience. It is fun to discover and a pleasure to use.

The interface of ZBrush is similar to that of the old "Paintbox" program, once used for all high-end retouching. Instead of pull-down menu names at the top of the screen that most Mac programs offer, ZBrush uses icons to represent various tools, effects and functions. When the user selects an icon from the top menu, a full contextual palette for that function appears on the screen. The palette then offers deeper options—called modifiers—for more variables. Since the only palettes shown are the ones currently needed, there is no palette-clutter getting in the way.

There is one small difficulty which, however, is easily overcome. Without a verbal menu, it's hard at first to remember and identify the many tools, functions and options. Until they become familiar, the user is advised to use the Balloon Help feature. As you move the cursor over the palettes, this will show an explanation of each tool you touch. (One problem this user has found is that keyboard commands don't always work. However, Pixologic is aware of this and is working on a fix.)

## Upgrade at Macworld 2001

A year later, when Version 1.23 was introduced at this year's Expo, it was excitement all over again. A raft of wonderful new features made, once again, for a stimulating demonstration.

In this latest version, Pixologic has added a helpful new tutorial interface on the bottom of the screen. This feature allows the user to load various tutorial scripts, which show the user how specific functions are done. "ZScripts", for example, is a plain-

text scripting protocol which acts like an action palette, but gives a plain-text explanation for each function in the script as you run it. This makes the learning process much easier by allowing you to see the steps involved in creating a piece.

"ZMovies", which has long been a part of the program, allows you to record what you are doing as an animation instead of a text script. It can be shared with other users.



Combination of Icons at top and opened side palette.

Side palette, if open at launch, can be left or returned to top of the screen as an icon.



Another welcome new feature is the Stencil palette. This provides a ready-made library of “french curve” shapes for use as masks, which can be manipulated in size and shape, using the “Stencil Coin Controller”. You can also create new stencil shapes, using or modifying the standard “Alpha” shapes provided by the program—or bring in imported files which can be quickly converted to grayscale masks by pressing the Make ST(encil) on the Alpha palette.

### ZBrush vs. Bryce

Another program, Corel’s “Bryce”, is similar in that it also does not use wireframes exclusively. But ZBrush gives the user a more active role in image creation. You can paint the image directly on

the screen and not have to wait for it to be rendered in order to see what you’ve done. By simply brushing over an area, you can add to or carve into the paint in a 2.5D space. You can edit any 3D shape you create ... adding, subtracting and virtually sculpting it ... while viewing it as a rendered image. You can then use special effects brushes to add texture and blending effects. Objects can be masked and rotated as desired. Your options, affecting color, texture, image maps, brush types and primitive shapes, are almost unlimited.

### Compatible with Photoshop

Another plus: you can create an image in Adobe Photoshop®, and open it as a texture in ZBrush, automatically wrapping it around any object, working intuitively, even resizing it on the fly. One great example: bring in a flat map of the world as a PICT file (RGB) and add it to your textures. Create a sphere with the map texture activated. Voila! You can rotate the sphere and see whatever part of the world you want.

### Not for 3D Only

There are many ways a non-3D artist can use this program, for creating design elements in traditional print media projects as well as for web graphics and button creation. Because ZBrush is essentially a paint program, it can be used to create authentic-looking, painterly art pieces. Images or shapes can be saved as

ZBrush documents or exported as Photoshop (.PSD) or TIFF images, giving the user options to further manipulate or integrate with Photoshop. In a recent book design project, this designer effortlessly created a sphere in ZBrush, then brought it into Photoshop and used it as an integrating element in numerous illustrations throughout the book. Its strong 3D feel added an element of dimension to each group of composited images.

### Documentation and Support

Many an otherwise worthwhile program is marred by inadequate documentation. ZBrush is a happy exception. Pixologic provides three kinds of support—all good. First is the documentation that comes with the program (in Acrobat PDF), providing the user with a good overview as well as specific information about each function of the program. Second, the new “ZScripts” act as on-screen how-to guides, acquainting the new user with the way things are done in the program. Third—most innovative and most useful for the novice—are Pixologic’s websites, accessible directly from the screen.

ZBrushCentral ([www.zbrushcentral.com](http://www.zbrushcentral.com)) is an on-line forum ... a place to post questions and comments; download and upload scripts, movies, images, tools, ZScripts and more; and keep up with the latest information about the application and what other users are doing with it. It is a virtual community, similar to a user group, and therefore always being added to. There are two other related sites: [www.zacademy.com](http://www.zacademy.com) will get you to the ZAcademy, which offers a gallery of ZBrush art and a number of detailed tutorials; [www.pixologic.com](http://www.pixologic.com) accesses the latest information about new versions and what’s available. (Currently there is a ZBrush v1.23 b upgrade. In the first quarter of 2002, there will be a more dramatic upgrade. Users will want to check the web pages for new developments.)

### Reviewer's Recommendation

ZBrush is a must-try application for those who want to explore 3D. It is also a great introductory program for anyone not familiar with traditional 3D rendering or who illustrate in paint programs.

It is simple and intuitive, yet complex enough to reward continued exploration as you seek to control more aspects of your creations.

Pixologic is currently offering ZBrush at an introductory price of \$292.50—50% off—for a limited time, expiration date not yet

announced. Keep an eye on their website for upgrades and utilities such as Texture Master which offers greater control for creating texture on 3D objects.

### Technical Requirements

According to Pixologic, the requirements for running ZBrush on the Mac platform are:

- 200 MHz PPC, or a G3 or G4 processor
- 128 MB RAM (can be Virtual Memory)
- 1024x768 monitor resolution set to Millions of Colors
- System 8.5 or later.

**Li Bendet** is a freelance high-end retoucher and artist on the Mac platform and is a member of MetroMac. Li teaches private Photoshop and PrePress classes. She can be reached at 212-598-4022 or at [libendet@finepeter.com](mailto:libendet@finepeter.com)

© Li Bendet 2001

“automatically works as a texture map around any object, working intuitively on the fly”

# Computer Connections

By Lloyd Prezant

## Finally, Realtime in Final Cut Pro

Apple has introduced Final Cut Pro 3, their video editing program. Using the G4 Velocity Engine hardware (found in Macintosh G4 processor-equipped computers), this program finally does real-time effects. And it does it in the software, with no add-on hardware. Now PowerBook G4 laptop users can have real-time effects too! Also included in the software package is OfflineRT, an offline format that can contain almost five times as much video footage as the Digital Video (DV) format. It provides 40 minutes of video for each gigabyte of hard drive space. Editors will be able to capture and transcode DV video to OfflineRT on the fly through a FireWire port. So, users can work with big, high-quality video files that include timecode and return edited product back to the source without using external storage. It's the first native offline format using DV that can be used with high definition as well as standard definition formats. More new features of Final Cut Pro 3 are: QuickView—a new preview mode that allows users to rapidly view complex effects; integrated compositing using Adobe AfterEffects plug-ins; Voice-Over tool for audio capture direct to the edit timeline from built-in or external microphone; 3D effects and titling from Boris and CGM, which help you create 2D and 3D animated titles; and advanced transitions and PeakDV audio editing tool from Bias, which gives you VST plug-in support; and time compression/expansion, which helps to precisely fit audio tracks to video. Users of DVD Studio Pro software can use it to encode edited video sequences from Final Cut Pro 3. Then one can author and burn DVDs using the Apple SuperDrive found in the later Macintosh models. System requirements are: Mac OS X v. 10.1.1 or 9.2.2; a 300MHz or faster PowerPC G3 or G4 processor with built-in FireWire; 256 MB minimum RAM (384 MB suggested for G4 real-time effects and 40 MB of hard disk space). G4 500 MHZ or higher recommended for G4 real-time effects and PowerBook G4 667 MHZ required for laptop real-time DV effects. Copies of Mac OS X and OS 9 are included for the list price of \$999. Upgrade for \$299. [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)

For those who said "OS 9.2.2?", Apple has also released this OS update with Final Cut Pro 3. OS 9.2.2 improves the compatibility of Classic application with OS X, and brings new support for Macs of the G3 and G4 type. OS 9.2.2 is a 21 MB download and can be found at: [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com) or easily gotten by using the Mac OS 9 Software Update control panel.

## Font Reserve(d) for Corel Corp

Corel Corp. has licensed DiamondSoft's Font Reserve. A special "Corel Edition" of the font management software is included in Corel GraphicsSuite 10 and CorelDraw 10 for the Macintosh. Font Reserve lets users preview,

activate copy and sort fonts for your system. In this latest release, version 2.6, you can download fonts directly from the internet through [MyFonts.com](http://MyFonts.com) Website. Up to 2000 fonts are supported by Font Reserve. More info at: [www.corel.com](http://www.corel.com) and [www.fontreserve.com](http://www.fontreserve.com)

## QuicKeys Now X

QuicKeys X has been updated by CE Software and is available free online, if you are a registered user of QuicKeys X. This version, 1.0.2, adds: an Insert Text option, which increases typing speed using Type text; options to show or hide other applications; speed enhancements and bug fixes. QuicKeys X can also record and play back mouse clicks and movements. QuicKeys 5.0 is the Classic version for pre-OS X systems, QuicKeys X is the OS X-savvy version. Price for X is \$59.95. If you use QuicKeys, upgrade price is \$49.95. Download the update: [www.cesoft.com/downloads/updates.html](http://www.cesoft.com/downloads/updates.html)

## Adobe Stores Digitals with Fotiva

Adobe Systems Inc. has acquired Fotiva Inc. They manufacture consumer software for digital image management, distribution and storage. This product line will complement their high-end applications—PhotoShop and PhotoDeluxe—in the storage and organization of digital images. [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

## iPod – iWant

Apple has the iPod. It's one of the many ways digital music goes portable. Is it for you? Here are the details: The iPod is housed in stainless steel, complementing the look of the PowerBook laptop line. It measures 4 inches tall by 2.4 inches wide and 3/4 of an inch thick—about the size of a deck of playing cards—and weighs six and a half ounces. There is a 160 x 128 pixel white backlit LED display, which makes it easy to see iPod in low-light or daylight environments. Use FireWire to connect to the Mac and download songs to iPod up to 30 times faster than USB-based MP3 players. In 10 seconds, you can transfer one song to iPod; 1,000 songs—its capacity—in 10 minutes. There is a 20-minute period of shock protection for the bumpiest playing conditions. You need Mac OS X v. 10.1 or OS 9.2 and iTunes 2 to use iPod. \$399 gets you the "Pod" and headphones, FireWire cable, power supply and iTunes CD. [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)

**Lloyd Prezant** is a NYC computer consultant who buys and sells used Mac computers and their peripherals. Call him at (718) 548-1623.



The editor's regular column "From My Keyboard", missing from this issue, will resume in the future.



# President's Pen

By Chris Bastian

## Shop Till You Drop

**A**s **New York City** continues to recover from the events of September, we are admonished to spend money to help the economic recovery. For those of us who feel compelled to do our part by building up our computer systems, it's worth remembering that **J&R Computer** on Park Row in Lower Manhattan has reopened after being stuck in the downtown restricted zone for nearly two months. J&R has opened a new Mac Department on the 4th floor of their new extension building. If you're able to travel out of the city, you should also make a stop at one of the region's two **Apple Stores**, one in Woodcliff NJ (about 30 minutes from the GWB) and one at the Palisades Mall in Rockland County, NY. If you've never been to one, it's a site to behold, as the Macintosh and all of its accessories are given their own stage (and theatre) in which to perform. Whichever Mac store you go to, please introduce yourself to the staff and let them know you're a MetroMac member.

## If You're Going to San Francisco

By the time you read this, I'll be back from the West Coast after attending my first **Macworld Expo San Francisco**. Most of us have experienced MWNY at some point in the past, but MWSF has the reputation of being bigger, bolder and even more energetic, supported in no small measure by the many Mac businesses located in nearby Silicon Valley. What does the new year hold in new hardware, OS X apps and essential peripherals? I'll spill the details (and the loot) at our meeting in February.

## Caught in the Web

If you haven't visited recently, please stop by at MetroMac's home page at <http://www.metromac.org>. Marc Silverman has been working tirelessly to build a single web location with discussion conferences, an event calendar, file sections and general membership information. It is our plan to eventually migrate away from our Yahoo! Groups conferences and centralize all our activities at one easy-to-remember location. Please stop by and let us know what you think.

## Passing the Plate

At December's meeting, our business discussion included the possibility of implementing a dues structure next year. So far,

we've been able to keep costs low (actually, almost non-existent); however, as a growing organization (currently, at about 120 members), it's becoming an increasing challenge to do everything for free. A modest charge of \$15-\$20 per member will give us the funding to print flyers, buy equipment to project the Mac display at meetings, enhance our online presence. Details will be discussed in the near future.

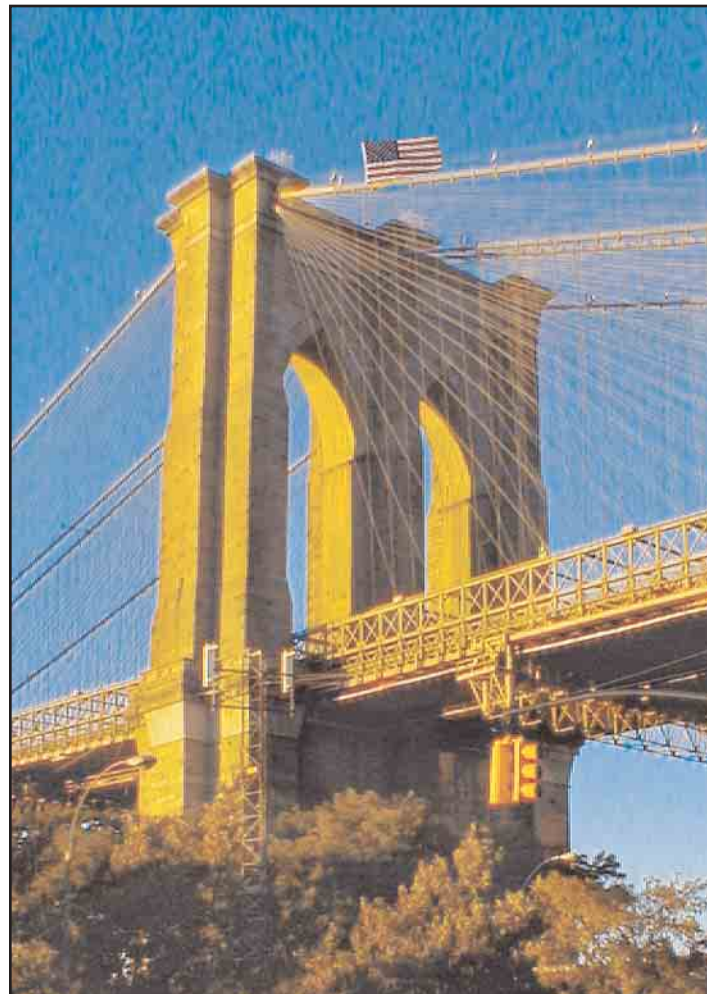


Image © Joanne Haire 2001

**Metro** / **Mac**

[www.metromac.org](http://www.metromac.org)  
[info@metromac.org](mailto:info@metromac.org)

### Metropolitan New York Macintosh Alliance

President	Chris Bastian
Secretary	Leigh C. Morgan
Dir. of Vendor Relations/ Online Administrator	Peter M. Fine
Web Development	Marc Silverman

### NEWSLETTER STAFF

Senior Editor	Bill Chachkes
Art Director	Alma Orenstein
News Editor	Lloyd Prezant
Copy Editor	Milton Herder
Contributors this issue	Li Bendet Joanne Haire

Entire publication © MetroMac 2002. All rights reserved. Contents may not be reproduced without permission.