Russell Brown,
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shares some
super tips and
techniques for
preparing
images for the
**World Wide
Web** in Adobe®
Photoshop® 4.0

INTERMEDIATE

Russ
Goes
Surfing
with
GIF

Adobe

OK, Web surfers. I have a great tip and technique just for you. I'm going to show you how to magically make a color in an indexed color image appear transparent in one area and opaque in another. "How can I use this?" you ask. Well, it's a great way to see through a background color but not disturb that same color inside the image.

CREATING TRANSPARENT AREAS WITH A CHANNEL MASK

1. Open an indexed color image that has a solid background that you want to remove. This image has a black background and black outlines inside the letterforms. (If the background color doesn't also appear within your image, you don't need this technique. The tools in the GIF Export filter let you mask out any single color throughout the image.)

2. Double-click the magic wand tool in the toolbox. This image has an anti-aliased edge, so increasing the tolerance ensures that the selection eats into the colored foreground edges and eliminates any black halo around the selection. Here I chose a Tolerance of 60 and, checked the Anti-aliased option.

3. Now click all the areas in the image that you want to be transparent on your Web page. Remember, the Shift key lets you add to the selection; the Command/Ctrl key lets you subtract from the selection. When everything that you want to be transparent is selected, choose Select > Inverse. In my image, this selects everything but the background.
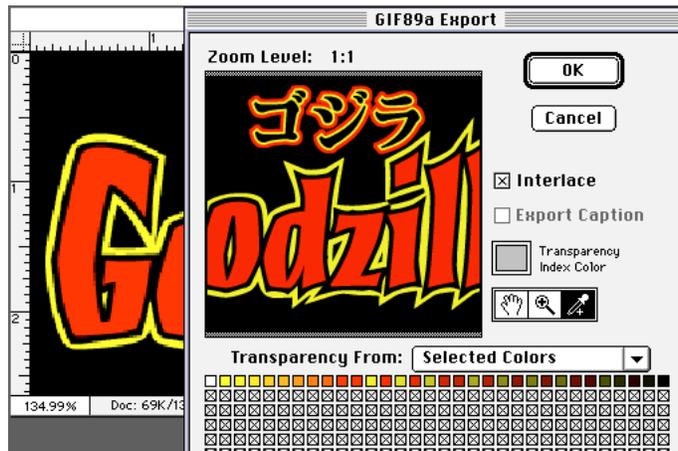
Shortcuts
Throughout this document, "Command/Ctrl", means Command on the Macintosh and Ctrl on Windows.

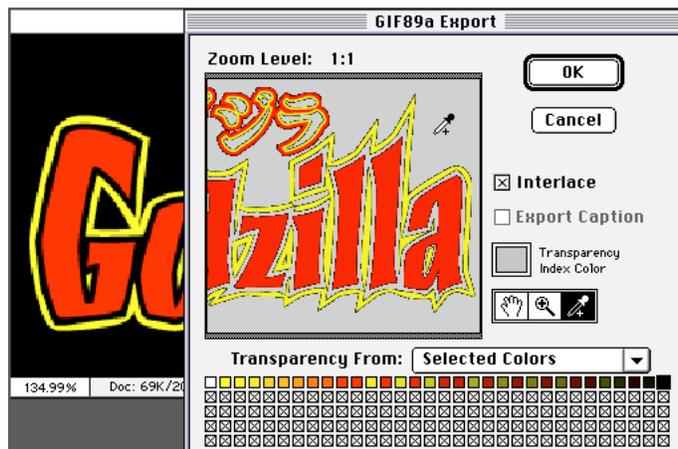## CREATING TRANSPARENT AREAS WITH A CHANNEL MASK

4. Choose Select > Save Selection, and save this selection as a New channel. Click OK.

**5.** Deselect (Command/ Ctrl+D). Then choose File > Export > GIF89a Export.

6. Just to make sure you understand why we made the mask, let's first use the eyedropper to select the background color in this image and make it transparent. Aha! Our dilemma is clear: All the blacks in the image become transparent, including the outlines around the letterforms.

7. Now for the simple solution: Choose the channel you just created from the Transparency pop-up menu to load your background mask. In this example, my mask is in Channel #2. Notice how nicely the mask takes out the background without affecting the inner areas of the image.
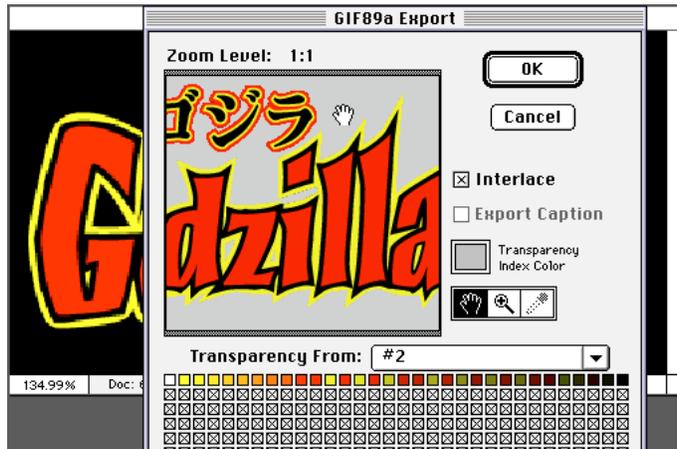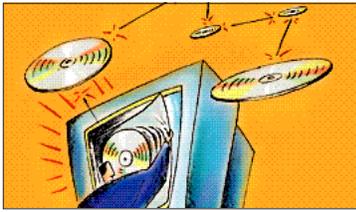
8. To create the GIF file, click OK to export the results. Notice that the name of the file has been appended with the extension .gif. Be sure to save your file with a nice short name with no spaces so that it's compatible across multiple computer environments.

**9.** Here is the final image placed in the Web page.

Surf's up, Web-heads. I've got a great Web design tip for you. I'm going to show you how to create an irregularly shaped, soft-edged graphic that looks good on your Web pages.

CREATING IMAGES WITH A SOFT EDGE

1. Open the image you want to use. Make sure that the image is a 72-ppi RGB image displayed at a 1:1 magnification. (This is how the image will appear on the Web.) If it's already an indexed color file, convert it to RGB mode for this technique. Double-click the lasso tool and increase the Feather value. (I used 10.) Make sure that Anti-aliasing is checked.
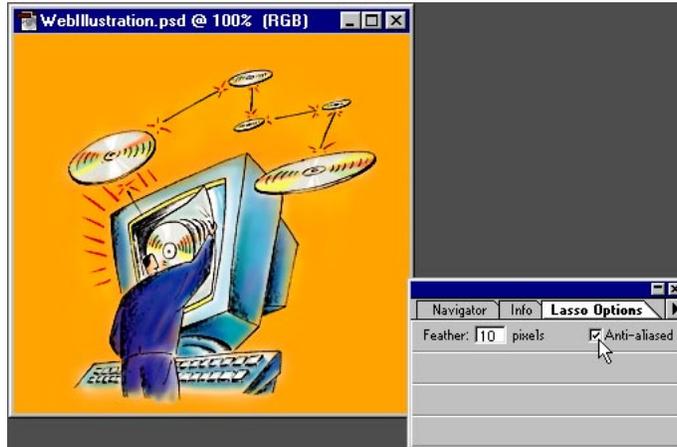
2. Make a selection around the image or area that you want to appear on your Web page. Hold down the Alt/ Option key to constrain the lasso tool to straight lines. Note that the pen tool is a great means for making a more complex selection, since you can edit your pen tool path before you convert it to a selection. Choose Select > Inverse to invert the selection.
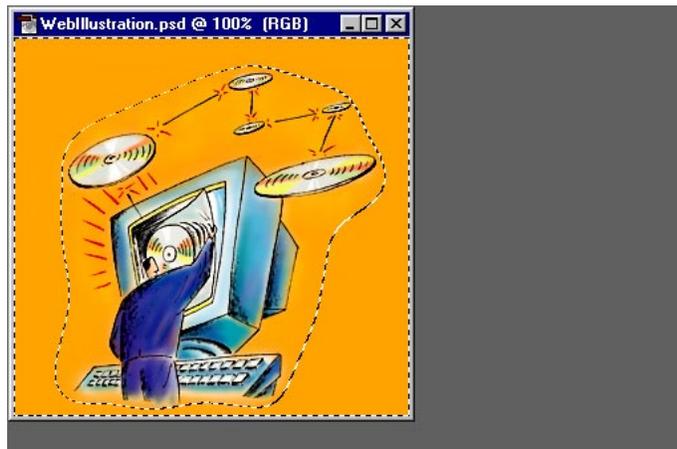
Shortcuts
Throughout this document, "Alt/Option" means Alt on Windows and Option on the Mac.

3. If this is a single-layered document, double-click the Background layer in the Layers palette and give the layer a new name.
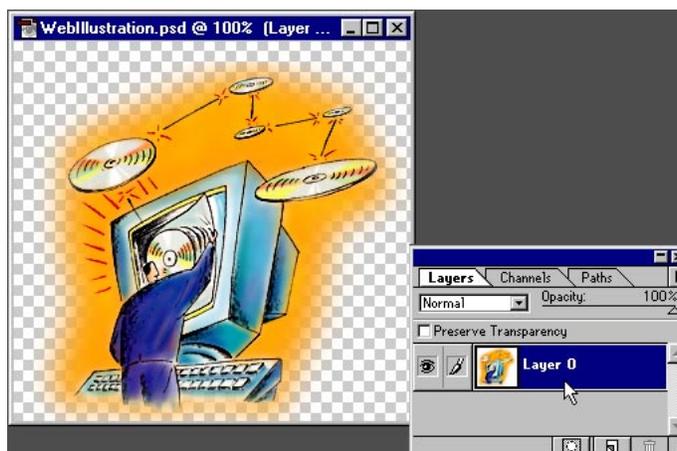
Layer Redefinition
Redefining the Background layer as a non-background layer lets you delete to transparent instead of to the background color.

4. You're now ready to export the image to GIF. Choose File > Export > GIF89a Export. If the filter doesn't appear in the Export submenu, reinstall the filter or check your Plug-in Preferences to make sure that the correct plug-ins folder is selected. Click the Transparency color box and select your transparency color if it is something other than the standard Netscape gray.
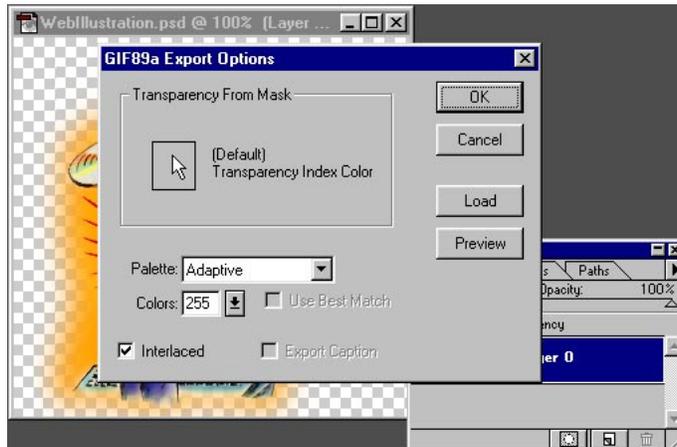
5. Preview the image and experiment with reducing the number of colors in the Adaptive palette. The fewer the colors in the image, the smaller and faster the image will be for display and when downloaded over the Web. With larger images, choosing fewer colors can make a big difference in file size; with smaller images, the difference is less significant.
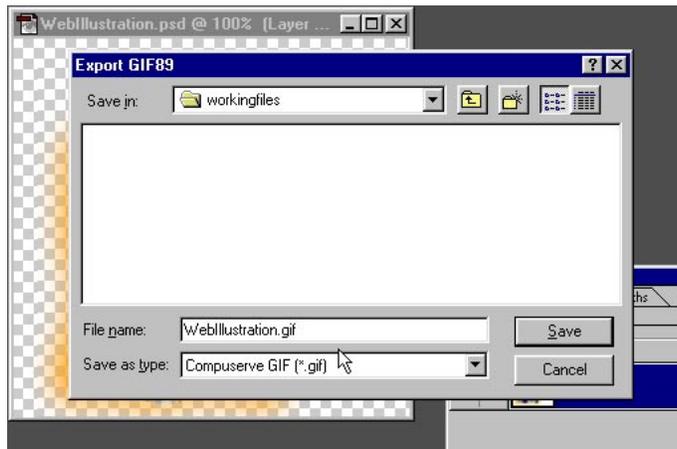
6. To finish, click OK in the GIF89a Export dialog box to export the file. Notice that the name of the file has been appended with the extension .gif. Be sure to save the file with a nice short name with no spaces so that it is compatible across multiple computer environments.

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