STORY BOARD MAKER

Shareware Demo v 0.9 for MS Windows 3.1

This program helps you create production story boards, draft copies of comic strips and comic books using already existing Windows bit map graphics images and text or description from your story or script.

This demo version works best in 640 x 480 resolution (the full upgrade version you get when you register and pay your fee supports 800 x 600, 1028 x 780 and 1280 x 1024) and saves files under a single name (UR_STORY.STB, the full upgrade version allows you to name individual files). You can then view or print the entire file (the full upgrade version allows you to view or print all or part of a file by a range of frame numbers) on most printers. The printed page covers almost a full sheet of standard 8 1/2 x 11 paper (A4 European formats should also print satisfactorily) in landscape (horizontal) mode (the full upgrade version also allows you to print 6 smaller frames vertically in portrait mode). Both version print in 150 dip (draft quality) resolution.

Professional television, motion picture and ad agency commercial producers, writers, copywriters, directors, special effects supervisors and art directors can use this product to make first drafts, mock-ups or story boards for strictly internal use. For your clients and studio executives, of course, you'll want the higher quality work that is created by your art director/production designer. But, for internal use by actors, directors, cinematographers, film editors and special effects department this program can cut down budgets by allowing anyone to create story boards using clip art, scanned images (provide, for example, by the art department) and text from the script (action and directions).

Independents and smaller production companies who don't normally employ the services of an art director can now construct story boards that are better than pencil and paper drawings and easier to make then photo-copied artwork. These student, documentary, corporate, sales training and industrial film producers should find this program highly useful for creating better tools to work with on a production to production basis.

This program also has some teaching uses for primary schools, where you can make computerized flash cards or "Dick and Jane" style books. In secondary schools "How to" programs can be written for, as an example, handling shop equipment.

This program is relatively easy to use. There are no menus hidden from view. Everything is done with plain "English" push buttons.

THERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER! First, this program was designed to work with 16 color/gray scale bit maps (4 bit files). Larger files (256 color [8 bit] or true color [24 bit] tend to bog the system down and crash. You should put all bit map files through a simple program like Win Paint and convert them to 16 color bit map (.bmp) files. Next, WHEN PRINTING a file YOU MUST MAXIMIZE THE MAIN WINDOW of the program so the entire frame can be seen. ANY AREA CUT OFF MAY NOT PROPERLY PRINT! After making a frame **DELETE** or SAVING a file you MUST **OPEN** and RE-LOAD the file, then use the scroll bars to position the proper frame. When changing any item in a particular frame (editing the text or changing a bit map file name) YOU MUST IMMEDIATELY SAVE the work. If you move forwards or backwards in the file the CHANGES WILL BE LOST. After saving, re-open the file and continue working. After VIEWING, PRINTING or CLOSING the programs you must also close the shell window. An occasional error message may occur, especially when you launch a view or print job from STORY BOARD MAKER. Disregard these error messages that come at the end of a successful view or print job (these message are generally caused by the fact that these free running programs were loaded via a "shell" -- Story Board Maker -- instead of being launched by a direct double-click of the **VIEW** or **PRINT** icons -- a feature of convenience that has a harmless side-effect).

There are three executable programs in the package. **STORY BOARD MAKER**, which allows you to enter dialog or screen directions that are associated with a graphics frame. This gets combined with an actual graphic image which you can convert from clip art (any direct Windows bit map or .bmp file and any other image that can be converted to a 16 color .bmp image via a program like Adobe Photo Shop or Corel Photo Paint). Remember, this image must be a 4 bit, 16 color or gray tone image. For BEST RESULTS your image should contain primary colors (red, blue, green, yellow, white, black, gray). Pastel colors (flesh, light blue, pink, etc.) tend to be a blend of two or more colors in staggered rows (white, yellow and red, for example make flesh). This program will stretch or shrink a bit map to fit the size designated by the printer or view area. Mixed colors tend to smear, streak and exhibit odd patterns (check boards, stripes, etc.). Also, color such as flesh for people's faces print as gray (black dots on white background) on black and white laser printers, which is very distracting to look at.

STORY BOARD VIEWER is another program that you can run directly or launch as a "shelled' program from **STORY BOARD MAKER** (such a launch tends to generate an error message at programs end, ignore this message). This allows you to view the finished story board or a work in progress. While this demo version WILL RUN on a higher resolution screen (800 x 600 or higher) the view image will not fill the screen (if you purchase the upgrade it supports these resolutions and allows you to fill the screen at most popular resolutions).

STORY BOARD PRINTER is the final program that you can either run directly or call up from **STORY BOARD MAKER**. This program is used to print your finished story board, which will be used in the making of your production. The demo version only prints one image (and associated text) as a landscape (horizontal) image on standard 8 x 11 paper. It takes about two minutes to print each page, so you must be prepared to tie up your system for this amount of time. This program consumes a considerable amount of system user and graphics resources (up to 4 MB per print). While we rate this program as running on a 4 MB system, we strongly recommend 16 MB for printing large scripts. A 4 MB system can only handle about 40 pages, while an 8 MB system about 70, therefore if you have limited RAM split your large scripts into smaller packages. The program is designed to flush print jobs out every 5 frames.

REMEMBER, this is a graphics intense program. The more you keep your images simple, with few and solid colors, the smoother the program will run. Occasionally a bit map will not load properly in either the viewer or printer. This occurs even with images that previously loaded. This is because the bit map images must be sized to fit the view/print ratio. You don't have to size images to any particular size (although they should be square or horizontally rectangular as tall narrow images will become distorted, with circles becoming ovals). An image 1' square will be sized to fit, as will an image 1200 x 1000 pixels in size. Smaller images view and print faster, but their resolution is poor. Larger images look better but gobble up memory and resources "handles" -- especially during printing.

With a little experience using this program you'll learn what size and complexity of drawings to avoid in order to make a good presentation or print job. Remember, this was designed for drafts and internal use... Don't get overly fancy with baroque images.

Also, different view and print resolutions have an effect on the amount of text that will be displayed. Generally you can get an easy 3 - 4 lines of text. Occasionally you can get up to 6 lines of text. You can select font and point size on the first frame (when changing a font always do it to the first frame and save the work immediately). Experience dictates what point sizes work best on a given system.

HOW TO WORK WITH THIS PROGRAM.

You should CREATE a sub directory with a name like CLIPART and park all you 16 color bit maps in this location. You should create a hard copy list of bit map file names with their

description -- a good first project for this program, load the bit map file using the **BROWSE** button, then enter the file number in the text area, print this out and keep this handy so you can create projects on the fly.

Run **STORY BOARD MAKER**, select **NEW**. The default instructional names disappear. The default frame number is 1. Frames MUST BE SEQUENTIAL (and the program will keep them sequential after the first number has been entered). You can change from frame 1 to any other number (if, for example, you are splitting a project into several files to keep them shorter).

Next, select a bit map image file. Press the **BROWSE BIT MAP** button and go to the directory where you keep your clip art or custom bit map files. Pick an image that fits the script and select that file name. Next, choose a font by pressing **FONT**. For this demo version 12 point type tends to work best, however for very large captions (and few total words and sentences) you can go up to 16 or 18 points. Font selection must be made on the first frame of a file. Next, put your cursor inside the large text box and enter your text, caption, dialog or screen directors that go along with the frame. When you are done, press **NEXT** and the frame number will increment.

NEVER construct a frame without a bit map image. If you have no current image, create a simple blank image (and name it blank.bmp) and use this until you get an image to replace it. You can leave no text in a frame, but never no image, as it will crash the program when you attempt a **VIEW** or **PRINT** operation.

SAVE your work often. After saving work it is advised your **OPEN** the file fresh and call it back into the **MAKER**, then use the scroll bars to go to the last frame in a file.

If a scene in a story board gets deleted you can also **DELETE** the frame from the file. The number sequence will not change, however, nor can you add a frame into this space. If you must make changes you should start at that frame and re-do all the frames or split the file (while this demo program names them via a single name you can use several sub-directories and manually rename files).

If you want to view a file you are working on, press **VIEW** and it will launch the viewer. After viewing the program will terminate. Close the window and re-launch **MAKER** to continue working. The same applies to printing a file.

The full version you can buy allows you to view or print a range of frames. This demo only allows you to print or view the entire file.

You don't have to run **MAKER** to **VIEW** or **PRINT**. These programs can be launched directly from the program group. We allow a chain launch from **MAKER** for sheer convenience (and then terminate the programs).

The **VIEW** program has a timer that allows you to see the images flash by for testing a file or holds them there for a long time so you can read the text.

The **PRINT** program has several delays built-in to keep the images from colliding during the printing process. Keep you images simple.

Dot and ink jet printers can take very long to turn out a print, especially in color. Fast laser printers in black and white will provide the most reliable results.

I created this program for my own internal use and a/v production. Through experience I have found that if you make sure your bit maps are 16 color/gray, un-cluttered, with few or solid colors and rectangular in size they will view and print smoothly.

If you experience repeated crashes at a particular frame, make sure it is a 16 color (4 bit)

image. Occasionally a 64 or 256 color image sneaks in without you taking notice. Call it into Win Paint and re-save it as a 16 color .bmp file.

For the price you paid (free, maybe $6 for the shareware disk or download charges off a BBS) I'm sure you'll find this demo a very nice value! If you like it and find it works well for your needs, consider sending me $15 for a single user upgrade ($25 for a 10 user site license or $35 for an unlimited user site license, regular retail is $20, $40 and $50, respectively). You will receive the latest version of the fully functional program (functions and features subject to change without notice) that offers other view, file and print options. You also get limited technical support and discounts for any other programs we offer (a small business accounting package is due out later in 1996).

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