

README FIRST (*short and painless*)

Hello from Byte by Byte Corporation. Thank you for your interest in our *SoftFX* 3D animation software for Windows.

There are a couple of things we would like to point out to you as you jump head first into one of the most powerful 3D Animation packages for Windows on the market.

Install the ***SoftFX*** program following the standard Windows procedures using "SETUP.EXE." If possible, accept the default directory that ***SoftFX*** chooses.

After the installation of ***SoftFX***, you will see your new directory decorated with ***SoftFX*** icons. As an aggressive user, you've probably launched the "SoftFX Animator" icon before the end of this sentence. That's fine. If you are looking at a list from File Manager, run the file "Winani.exe" this is the executable for ***SoftFX***'s Animator. When either of these two options are done, you will see a Startup screen with your standard "New, Open, Cancel, etc..." options.

When you decide to create a new animation, or open an existing one, be sure to "Stop" the current wireframe-animation (if it is playing) by selecting the "Stop" button (over on the right side in a window entitled "Animate"), or you can press the "S" on your keyboard. Then select your choice from the "File" menu.

SoftFX has two different work spaces: the Animator and the Modeler. If you have traveled the same route as this text file, you have been looking at the Animator. Feel free to open demo animation files and play them back using the controls on the "4th View Window" or render them (make them realistic) by using the "Execute Renderer" button on the Actions palette. (View rendered files via the "Player" or "Viewer" modules located under the "Windows" menu item.) Further, study how the animations are composed by showing Keyframer window also located under the "Windows" menu item (Ctrl + K).

If at this point we have you saying, "execute renderer?" or "wireframe animation?" then we will give you a hint: as you move your mouse over the tools in the floating palettes, read the help bar text on the bottom of your screen. If this is not in-depth enough for you, visit the extensive help files located under the last menu item.

When you are finished poking around in the Animator, you may want to discover the modeling capabilities of ***SoftFX***. To do this, you must go to the other "work space" or the "Modeler." To get over there, look under the "Windows" menu item and select "Modeler" (Ctrl + M for the real eager).

When ***SoftFX*** displays the Modeler, you will probably notice that the workspace looks much like the Animator's work space. You're right! It is more 3D space represented by a Top, Front, Side and Perspective (4th View). Notice that the tools you will need to use in the Modeler are a bit different than the ones in the Animator (the "Help" bar at the bottom of your screen works here, too).

If you are running ***SoftFX*** under Windows 95 or Windows NT, a window entitled "View OpenGL" will appear on top of the normal "View" window in the ***SoftFX*** Modeler. The "View OpenGL" window enables you to display shaded models, even with texture maps. To view a specific texture map on your model, click on the "View OpenGL" close box, select "Choose Hint Map", and make sure the "Hint Image Maps" check box in the "View OpenGL" Preferences is on. Note that Windows and WfW 3.11 do not support OpenGL. The "View OpenGL" window is defaulted to be on but can be turned off in the "Preferences" menu item under the "File" heading. You may notice a lot of disk activity if you try to use the "View OpenGL" window with less than 16 megabytes of RAM.

Open a few models that came with your ***SoftFX*** program. See how they are represented in 3D space. Play with them, bend them, explode them; there is an arsenal of fun tools and effects. Then when you're ready, build your own models by drawing, extruding, lathing, duplicating or by just exploring! (And don't be afraid of the help files if you have questions).

We hope you have fun with **SoftF/X** 3D Animation Studio for Windows. We put a lot of thought and technology into this software as a result of listening to you, the user. If you have any questions, comments, please email us at softfxsupport@bytebybyte.com.

Thanks.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Q: "SoftF/X is running - there is an animated ball bouncing down the stairs, but everywhere I click gives me a system beep. How do I stop it?"

A: Your 'startup animation' is playing. To stop it, select the "Stop" button in the "Animate" window (or hit the "S" on your keyboard). Now SoftF/X is ready to give its undivided attention.

Q: "I am trying to open a file in the animator (animations are ".stg" files) but SoftF/X keeps asking me to locate "C:\SoftFX\..." What do I do?"

A: You have installed the SoftF/X program to a different directory than the default "C:\SoftFX". Don't worry, just find the model (models are ".sce" files) that SoftF/X is looking for (match the names together). Chances are SoftF/X will prompt you to the correct directory of ".sce" files to make it easier for you to locate. Also read the "Notes.wri" for an automated procedure to redirect the path names.

Q: How do I make these files look real? They are all wireframe...

A: The wireframe animation (in the Animator) or preview models (in the Modeler) are there to give you a hint of what your creation looks like. To get the realistic look, you must "Render" your scene. Briefly - select the "Execute Renderer" tool in the "Actions" floating tool palette. (It is the half-shaded globe on the right-hand palette, the top-left button). This will take you to a dialog that looks like a "print" dialog. Basically, decide if you want to render 'one frame' or a 'range of frames' (make your selection at the bottom of the render dialog window). Feel free to experiment with the other settings. Check the "Help" files for specifics. After your rendering is complete (you can track the status as it renders) you then activate the "Player" -- if you rendered a range of frames; or the "Viewer" -- if you rendered a single frame. The Viewer and Player are located under the Window menu item. You will be prompted for the appropriate files.

Q: Why are my renderings in the Modeler not as realistic as those done with the Animator?

A: Rendering in the Modeler is basically for quick checks to the model. Final scene composition, lighting, and rendering should be done in the Animator.

Q: I tried to render the .stg file "ZBIRDS.STG" but I received a dialog that read, "Failed to load the Image Processing Library C:\SoftFX\XIMAGE\FOG.DLL." How do I load it?

A: You probably did not load SoftF/X into the default directory "C:\SoftFX". If you would like to see the post-process libraries, look under the "Edit" menu for "Post Processes." Delete the existing "FOG.DLL" and re-render. For the ambitious, select "ADD" and choose a new Post Process Effect. You will then be prompted for parameters. Fog with 10% visibility, 50.00 start point and 200.00 end point looks very nice with the ZBIRDS.STG. (This will all make sense when you see the dialog boxes.)

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