

Into the Arc: More Musings with

by Mike Williams

The article I wrote last month, illustrating what can be achieved by combining the use of Paint and Draw, prompted me to think further. The two ideas described here are the result, and show again how much more can be achieved when two or more Desktop applications are combined together. This, of course, applies not only to Paint and Draw: there are many other tools around which can achieve together what



Figure 1.
Starting with the
base picture otherwise seems impossible.

STENCILS

The first effect which I investigated is using a stencil, but in reverse. The object is to overlay a sprite image with a stencil so that the original image shows through the letters of the stencil while the rest is obscured. Draw provides by far the best vehicle for creating the text of the stencil, but we can only turn this into a transparent mask by going into Paint, and then finally positioning a sprite and the stencil

as two layers within Draw. Let's see how this works out in practice.

Figure 1 shows the base picture to be overlaid with the stencil. This comes from a scanned image which I have cropped. The car in the picture is an Austin-Healey Frogeye Sprite, so we will use the Frogeye name for the stencil.



Figure 2.
Creating the text and sizing to fit

With the original image in Draw, select a suitable font (I used Bookmark Demi) and size (not too important as you can resize the text object in Draw). Now enter the text, and move and resize it over the picture to the final size you want, as shown in figure 2 (text coloured for greater clarity).

Once you have the size and proportions of the text correct, move the text away from the picture to a vacant area of the Draw window. It may help to keep the text object selected (enclosed by a red dashed rectangle) as this



Figure 3.
Selecting the mask option in Paint

helps with sizing in the next step.

Assuming Paint is already loaded, click with the Menu button over Paint's icon bar icon and choose the Snapshot facility. Click on the OK

button in the resulting dialogue box and then carefully drag out a rectangle to enclose the text in the Draw window, using the red dashed rectangle as a guide if present.

As soon as you release the Select button, a save box appears: just drag the sprite icon to Paint, and then double-click on the sprite file window to open the sprite window now containing the text. To achieve transparency, Click with the Menu button over this window to obtain the main Paint menu, and then select the Mask option from the Edit sub-menu (see figure 3). If not already open, use Paint's menu to reveal the Colours and Tools windows. Make sure the Colours window is open to its fullest extent, showing the Mask colour at bottom left.



Figure 4.
The 'stencil' complete

Next, select the Mask colour (a T will appear over it), the Fill function from the Tools window, and click also on the Global option which has now appeared. Click over any of the letters in the text, and all the letters will be filled to the Mask colour. You may also like to colour the stencil suitably (see figure 4).

To complete our task, simply drag the sprite we have created (using Paint's Save option) into the original Draw window. Select and slide this over the original picture to achieve the

transparent stencil effect, and select and delete the original text which was left in the same window. The effect is now complete as you can see in figure 5.

I have just shown you one way to achieve the



Figure 5.
The final result
of using a
stencil

stencil effect, but I am sure that there are many variations on this theme which are possible. If you find the step-by-step description lengthy, I can assure you that it takes far less time to achieve the end result than it does to describe it.

SEMI-TRANSPARENT PANELS

Using the Mask colour as described above gave me another idea. You have probably seen on television instances where text (perhaps subtitles) appears over a panel through which you can still dimly see the picture. I thought it would be



Figure 6.
Examples of
semi-
transparent text
panels

interesting to try and create the same effect.

Again, the main picture should be imported into Draw, which is where the text should also be generated, but the problem is how to create a

coloured panel with holes in it. The method I hit upon was as follows.

With Paint installed, click with Select on its icon bar icon, and then on OK to create a blank sprite window (completely white at this stage) as normal. Now use Paint's Zoom option to increase the magnification to 4 (or more), whereupon a grid of lines will appear marking the individual pixel positions within the sprite (this is our embryo grid pattern).

Make sure this sprite window is open to its fullest extent, but with Paint's icon bar icon still visible. Now use the Snapshot facility as before to drag out a rectangle enclosing part of this grid. The proportions of this rectangle should correspond to those required for the panel, and the size should be roughly twice final size, though you may need to repeat this process several times to get the best result. Now save this new image directly into Paint giving a new

sprite file window, and double-click on this in turn to open the sprite window showing the grid.

Because of the zoom factor in use, a pixel grid will also be superimposed upon the grid of the sprite. Using Paint's Colours and Tools windows, colour in the holes in the grid with the Mask colour, and the grid lines in a colour of your choice. Now save this sprite into the Draw window containing the original picture.

At this stage the panel which appears probably looks too coarse to achieve the desired effect. However, if you select this panel (in Draw) and use the Magnify option to scale it by a factor of 0.5, a better result emerges. All that now remains is to create the desired text object, move this over the panel and group the two together. Finally, move the panel with text to the required position

uR

All About Outline Fonts (continued from page 47)

document may have been only 300K in size, but by the time it has been expanded to PostScript, you may find it larger than can fit on a single floppy.

An alternative and altogether better way to get your artwork done is to make use of a DTP bureau that specifically handles Archimedes output. Your document can be sent to them in its original format (Draw, Impression, or whatever) on a standard ADFS floppy, and they will probably already have a copy of all your fonts anyway. At least one of these bureaux (see below) is equipped with FaxPack, so your document could be faxpacked to them and the bromides sent off to you in the post the same day!

CONCLUSION

The Archimedes is rapidly proving itself as a highly competent and inexpensive route at the forefront of the DTP revolution, and at the heart of its power is the Font Manager.

The Acorn Font Manager is a truly remarkable piece of software, and copes quickly and efficiently - and in a sense invisibly - with the incredibly complex business of screen display and printing from outline font information. It is also a remarkable fact that other computer systems require a different font management system to be built into each and every piece of application software, whereas in the Acorn RISC OS 3 system it comes free in ROM. As such it represents unbeatable value for money!

Sources:

FontEd:

available from various FD libraries

Trace and D2Font:

David Pilling,
P.O. Box 22, Thornton Cleveleys,
Blackpool FY5 1LR.

Italic:

Design Concept,
30 South Oswald Road,
Edinburgh EH9 2HG.

Advice on image-setting direct from

uR

over the picture.

I have to admit that considerable experimenting was needed to achieve an acceptable result. It is difficult to judge the size of the grid when using Snapshot, and any attempt to resize the panel in Draw by dragging always destroyed the uniformity of the semi-transparent panel -



caption

Magnify was the only acceptable way to do this. Figure 6 shows some examples of what I achieved.

That s all for this month. If y o u experiment

with Paint and Draw and produce any interesting results then do send them in and tell us how they were done. The best examples will considered for publication in the magazine, or on the magazine disc as appropriate.