Snap happy

Present yourself in the best possible light, in the strangest locations — and do it using your PC. Gordon Laing looks forward to digital photography and image manipulation.

If we're to believe what the major graphics and imaging manufacturers are saying, and put two-and-two together concerning forthcoming product launches, then photography and computers, digital or otherwise, are going to be the next big thing. It's all coming together. Inkjet printers are being developed to a point where they'll be offering true photographic quality on glossy paper by next year, scanners are becoming increasingly commonplace, and just about everybody and his uncle are releasing digital cameras. The next thing you know, Kodak, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and Live Picture go and announce a new imaging format that, while interesting, could be described as Photo CD Mark II.

Yes, it's all happening, so this month I'll fill you in on all the gossip and news. Font fans will be interested in the new AgfaType CD 7.0 collection, and readers will be pleased to learn of a long-awaited upgrade to Adobe Type Manager.

ATM Deluxe 4

After what seems like an eternity, Adobe has announced a new version of Type Manager: ATM Deluxe 4.0 for Windows 95, NT and Macintosh. This will be of particular interest to NT users, who previously had to convert their Type-1 fonts to the TrueType format. ATM addresses many of the problems I have mentioned in earlier columns concerning TrueType and Type-1 font technologies, although so far there's no mention of OpenType.

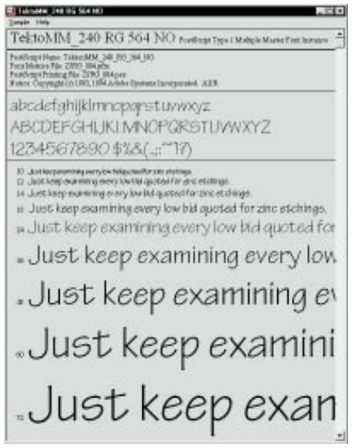
A couple of months ago I printed samples of TrueType fonts with on-screen font-smoothing activated from the Microsoft Windows 95 Plus Pack, compared to Type-1 fonts, as rasterised on-screen by ATM.

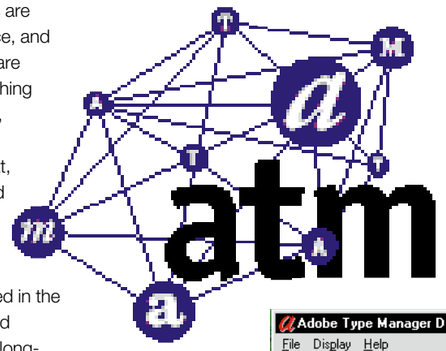
ATM was first marketed as a cure for the "jaggies", by creating bitmaps on-screen at any size — brilliant stuff, and for years we were all satisfied with the results. Then anti-aliasing came along, where grey-shaded dots were placed in the jagged steps of a bitmap outline. When viewed from a distance, the outline appeared smoother.

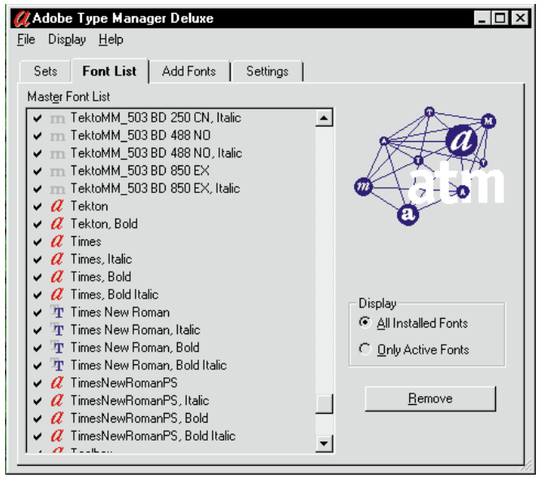
Adobe offered the facility for type in Photoshop, but sadly not from earlier versions of ATM. Buy the Microsoft Plus Pack for Windows 95, and anti-aliasing smoothing is offered for TrueType fonts only. Now ATM 4 will do the smoothing job for Type-1 fonts. It will also manage TrueType fonts, along with Adobe's PostScript Type-1 format.

If you've ever discovered hoards of fonts clogging up your system folders and slowing your machine down, then you'll appreciate the facility to group them into suitably-named sets. Activate and deactivate sets at will and you can even export sets to other machines or across platforms, although the sets contain only lists, not the fonts themselves.

You can finally preview on-screen fonts, and there's improved support for creating







At last, a new Adobe Type Manager: ATM, soon to be available in Deluxe version 4

Right **ATM 4 can manage all your font formats, including TrueType, Type-1 and Multiple Master**

Above right **ATM 4 is able to offer previews of all fonts. Notice that font smoothing is now available for Type-1 formats**

Font of the Month

bayer type architype

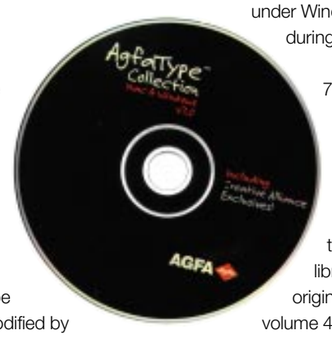
abçdéfghijklmnöpqrstuvwxyz
ß&1234567890

This issue's Font of the Month is Bayer, a typeface revived for Architype Volume 2, created exclusively for the AgfaType library. It was designed by David Quay and is supplied by FontWorks. Quay and fellow award-winning British designer, Freda Sack, established the Foundry in London, in 1990, to design original-quality PostScipt fonts.

multiple master fonts. These latter have the facility to adjust various aspects of the style, such as weight and width. It's a subject I'll be covering in detail in the near future.

And the real bonus? The Windows 95 version was released in July, to be followed by the Macintosh version a month later. Both will ship with 30 fonts, including Minion Condensed, Utopia and Tekton multiple master families, and display faces including Lithos, Nueva, Willow and Critter. There will probably be a special introductory offer for the first three months of sale.

And in the news…



Those concerned with other platforms may be interested to learn than SunSoft has licensed an advanced TrueType font processor for use in its Solaris operating system.

The original TrueType processor has been modified by Bitstream to provide what it describes as a complete typographic technology solution. In other words, Solaris users will have access to the huge number of TrueType fonts available.

The almost legendary Paint Shop Pro has returned in version 4 for Windows 95. Costing £49.95 on floppy or CD, or £19.95 for an upgrade (add VAT to both prices), it will no doubt put many heavyweight and heavily-priced photo-retouching applications to shame. A full review will be published in our *First Impressions* section, soon. Contact Digital Workshop.

Registered users of PageMaker 6 for Windows should look out for version 6.01 winging its way to them. This free, updated CD includes three new plug-ins, as well as a new version of the HTML Author Plug-in, improved Kodak Precision transforms, updated PostScript printer description files and a Quark XPress document converter. This converts from XPress for Windows to PageMaker for Windows but works only under Windows 95. It will be tested during the coming months.

The AgfaType Collection 7.0 dual-platform type CD is now available free of charge from the usual font suppliers. It contains 4,300 typefaces: 500 more than version 6.0. Four libraries are featured: the original Adobe Library up to volume 405, the Agfa Type and Symbols library (over 10,000 images), and débuting on the CD format are the Cornerstone Collection and the Creative Alliance Library. The latter includes a selection of Art Parts EPS illustrations, faces from FontHaus, and more. Do get hold of a copy and check it out. But before you get too excited about getting 4,300 free typefaces, remember they're all locked until you phone for individual keys with your credit card handy.

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The digital future

On a recent trip to visit Hewlett-Packard on its home turf, many of us were surprised by one of the company's announcements. Well, more of an implication really. It was revealed that there will more than likely be a Hewlett-Packard digital camera sometime next year. The company seems obsessed with getting as many people as possible to use their PCs for photography and image manipulation.

H-P, like its competitors, is working desperately hard on producing a cheap colour inkjet printer, capable of producing photographic-quality results, by the middle of next year. These machines will not be optimised for plain paper, but the decent glossy stock we're used to handling for standard colour prints.

We were shown a video which featured the H-P family at home. The PC was, of course, the H-P Pavilion (reviewed in *First Impressions, PCW* September), which features a built-in colour scanner capable of swallowing A5-sized prints in a manner similar to an in-car CD player. Dad was using this PC to scan his favourite family snap and to electronically retouch junior's satanic red-eye.

Junior runs in and snaps Dad, with his H-P digital camera, producing an image ready to be downloaded to the PC at a later date for further fun; of course, the final result is a beautiful colour print from an H-P inkjet. The essential point is that the printout is a new and improved personalised and customised photo, but one of the same image and print quality as the original.

Stacks of prints

This is the concept that H-P and many others are trying to encourage. Take your stacks of unseen prints and customise them into something useful with your PC. Digitally remove red-eye or other unsightly blemishes, trim the shot, cut people out and paste them in new and uncompromising locations — the possibilities are endless.

The trouble is that no-one's yet built a printer which can trim the edges off a sheet of paper to produce a postcard-sized print. The solution is to encourage A4 applications. How about a calendar with your pets on it? Or a montage of holiday shots? Remember that once on your PC you can add captions, titles or a whole variety of accompanying text and graphics.

The big problem with computer imaging is the cost of the equipment with which to do it. Most computer users expect to save their files and move around them in a matter of seconds, as they're used to working with plain text or spreadsheet files. Give them a large graphics file and watch how fast they lose interest when any kind of manipulations occupy their machine for the next half a minute or so.

Those of us who work with graphics files are used to waiting a while, even on high-spec machines, but the truth is that there are loads of people out there who don't know what to expect, might have an average machine, yet quite fancy the idea of image manipulation. Short of educating them on the finer points of making a cup of tea while waiting for a Photoshop filter to finish, or upgrading their hardware to handle the load, it's up to the manufacturers to come up with a cunning plan to ensure their potential new market isn't deterred.

FLASHPIX™

Enter the new FlashPix image file format: a collaboration between Eastman Kodak, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and Live Picture. Kodak is familiar with trying to popularise a new image format, although PhotoCD, despite being technically excellent, failed on a few counts. The ultimate failure was the company's decision to market it both as a view-on-the-TV home format and as a professional publishing tool. It never caught on in the home, while most publishing professionals were either unhappy with the unusual colour space or unprepared for the large file sizes.

As we know, Hewlett-Packard is keen to get as many people into digital imaging as possible so that it can shift a ton of colour printers. Live Picture is involved with professional imaging and Microsoft is lending its OLE support, along with wanting to have a finger in every pie.

On the surface, FlashPix appears to share many concepts with PhotoCD. At the time of writing there were few technical details available, but here is the gist of it: FlashPix will support images of any size and resolution but, like PhotoCD, it will store each image at multiple resolutions. The clever bit is that each resolution is sub-divided into square tiles. This allows applications to load only the section of the image on which you're working, saving your computer the time and effort required to load the whole thing in one go. A fairly modest machine should be able to handle large files with speed. It's similar to how Macromedia X-Res 2 operates.

Another cunning plan is to store scripts describing the editing operations you've made separately from the image itself. In theory, this means operations performed on a low-resolution image could be applied at a later date to a larger one. It's not yet certain how scripts will be implemented, but they are said to be contained with the image data inside a "structured storage container". Microsoft's OLE Structured Storage ensures the files are compatible with existing storage architectures such as OLE II, OpenDoc, and Java and Netscape plug-ins. When opening an image, a FlashPix-savvy application will apply the script to the raw image data. The application should also select a suitable resolution on which to perform the script.

FlashPix offers three compression options: uncompressed, single-colour compression, and variable JPEG compression. It supports multiple colour spaces, which include PhotoCD's Photo YCC, a calibrated monochrome option for greyscale images, and a calibrated RGB space, entitled NIFRGB. Uncalibrated versions of these three will allow existing uncalibrated files to be converted into the FlashPix format.

If it works, FlashPix will be transparent to the end-user. The only thing they'll notice is greater speed and ease of operation. If the applications are designed properly, they'll worry about selecting the correct image resolution, while tiling and scripts ensure that modest hardware configurations aren't bogged down with processing. When it arrives later this year, FlashPix, accompanied by suitably updated applications, could open up the world of digital imaging to what the developers hope will be a huge new market.

•PCW Contacts

If you fancy a chat, write to me at our Broadwick Street address, or email me as **gordon@pcw.ccmail.compuserve.com**

Fontworks 0171 490 5390
Digital Workshop 01295 258335