AnimHelp 1.5
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AnimHelp is a shareware utility designed to help you draw sprite-based animations. The utility came about because I am a Mac

and Super Nintendo game developer, and the artists I work with find it almost impossible to draw animating objects with applications like Painter, Studio/32, Photoshop, etc., because none of them have any kind of animation features.

Most game artists are used to working with *Deluxe Animate* on the PC, so I have designed AnimHelp to be a substitute. The '1' and '2' keys switch frames, and

the arrow keys are used to align each frame.

All you've got to do is copy each frame from your drawing program into the clipboard (via Copy or Cut) and then select either Add, Replace, or Insert in AnimHelp to place the frame into the current animation sequence. For example, say you have a 5 frame walking animation for a dog:

- drag the lasso around

frame 1

- Cut it into the clipboard
- click on AnimHelp's Animation Window
- select Add
- repeat this for all 5 frames
- align each frame using the arrow keys
- set the animation speed from the Animation menu
- select Run Animation from the Animation menu
- click to stop the animation

Holding down the "2" key to advance a frame is a quick way to check your anim.

Selecting New from the File menu will erase all frames so you can start over.

Note that the only item in the Edit menu that does anything is Set Bit Depth. The Set Bit Depth allows you to set the bit depth of the frames. For best performance, it should be set to the depth of the screen, however, lower bit depths are better for memory. A 16 bit depth will use twice as much RAM as an 8 bit depth. A 32 bit depth

will use four times as much.

The **SET WINDOW SIZE** menu item will change the size of the Animation window. This also changes the size of each frame's buffer. The larger you make the window, the more memory each frame will use. The smaller the window, the less memory each frame will use. You can use ResEdit to permanently change the size of the default Animation Window. The size of the

window is used when printing Anims to the printer.

PRINT ANIM from the File menu will group all of the frames of your anim and print them - as many will fit on a page. You can use this to make a flip-book type animation. Because this feature is new, I don't know how well it will work on everyone's printer, so please let me know if you have problems. It works fine on my HP LaserJet IIp.

New in version 1.4 are features to aid in aligning frames. It is now possible to "keep" a frame on the screen so that you can align another frame to it. To use this simply select Keep This Frame from the Alignment menu. This will keep the current frame on the screen until you select Keep Frame On/Off to disengage it. The frame you selected will always appear behind any other frames you select so

that you can align the frames to that target frame. *Please note that the simple keystokes "J" and "K" may be used to select these menu items. It is not necissary to hold down the Apple key.*

Also, per request from one of our users is the ability to put crosshairs on the screen. The crosshairs can be activated per frame or for all frames. Simply hit the "Y" key or select Toggle Frame

Crosshairs from the Alignment menu to toggle the crosshairs for the current frame. The Crosshairs ALL On and Off do what you figure.

COMPOSITOR

In brief, the Compositor feature (new to v1.5) takes a PICS file, scans for objects, and then creates a composite PICT file with all of the objects layed out nicely.

Here's why this is useful: Say you're rendering some sprites to be used in a game. Say that it's a spaceship and it's 40 frames. Well, your renderer is either going to

spit out 40 individual PICT files, or something useless like a QuickTime movie. Until now, I've always had to go into each and every PICT file and manually cut out each frame and paste it into a new composite PICT file. When you've got 40 frames per object, that can take a VERY long time.

So, what you can do with Compositor is:

- Tell your rendering

program to spit out the animation in PICS format.

- Go into AnimHelp and select Select PICS File To Composite from the Compositor menu and select the PICS file you created with the renderer.
- Then select Make Composite and watch the magic happen.

The Compositor scans each frame for the object. <u>It assumes that the color at coordinates 0,0 to be the</u>

background color for all the PICS. It cuts out the area of the screen that is not the background color and then pastes it into a 640x480 32bit TrueColor PICT file. It optimally crams as many of the frames as is can onto the PICT. If the PICT fills up, it asks you to save it, then it continues on a new PICT.

Compositor does in seconds what normally takes a millennia to do by hand.

Because the Compositor reads PICS files, it can read in an AnimHelp saved animation file and create a composite from that as well. Remember that saved AnimHelp files are simply PICS files with a header resource.

NOTE: The Select Shrink Color item in the Compositor menu should only be used if you really, really need to use it. It is not fully implemented yet and is not entirely

reliable. What it "should" allow you to do is to manually select the background color to use when scanning for objects. When you select this, the cursor turns into a

crosshair and you are prompted to click somewhere in the PICS Display window. The color you click on is the color used. The problem is that it uses the color on the screen, not necessarily the color in the actual PICS file. This should be pretty reliable if your screen is set to 32 bits (Millions), and may be mostly reliable if set to 16 bits (Thousands). It will most likely be very unreliable if your screen is set to 8 bit

(256 colors). Some day I'll get around to fixing this. But for now, just assuming the color at 0,0 works pretty good for me.

Just remember that this is a shareware utility, and all I'm asking is a measly $10. So please donate so that I can continue to do more shareware utilities and games.

If you have any questions or problems, I can be reached

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VERSION INFO

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v1.0:   It worked.

v1.1:   Fixes a bug with the Replace feature. The old version did not erase the existing frame correctly, so if the new frame did not overlap the old, then both appeared. This version fixes the erase bug, and Replace works fine.

v1.2: After many people "begging" me but none paying me any shareware money, I finally put in a Save feature so that anims can be saved and reloaded later. NOTE: If I ever get a single shareware donation for this, I'd be tempted to put a scripting feature in so that you can lay out complex animations. Heck, I might even put in QuickTime support eventually.

v1.3: Adds the ability to change the window size from within the application instead of having to use ResEdit. Adds printing capabilities.

v1.3.1: Fixed a problem with *Brushstrokes* and possibly some other programs.

v1.4:   Added new alignment features: Keep frame & crosshairs.

v1.5:   Fixes various minor

bugs including a printing bug. Added the Compositor abilities.