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Effects list. On bringing it up, you can select from a long list of options (like Biochain, Charcoal, Cheetah, Eye, JFK, Medical, Pencil, Rake, Smoke, and dozens more) and apply your choice to either the whole picture or to a selected region. Most of the painting effects are unique to IFX2, so don't expect to find them in other software. Add to this the ability to add "paper" textures to an image (whole or part), and you have an expectant canvass before you.

### Alpha-ing Around

"Compositing" has become a buzzword for computer artists in the know, a method by which separate graphics screens can be combined in an infinite number of ways to produce state-of-the-art illustrations and photo compositions. IFX2 has a most awesome variety of tools to enhance creativity in this area. You can combine separate pictures on different screens, and also include an Alpha channel to boot. If you don't know, an Alpha channel is a grayscale graphic that uses the lightest colors to depict where images will combine, while the darkest colors usually are meant to "show thru" a live video feed. As expected, IFX2 has a host of separate Alpha tools. There's really no way to do my

description of compositing with IFX2 justice except with a dedicated tutorial, something I plan to do in the coming months in Amazing (probably a tutorial series). Angled motion blurs, distortions, ARexx applications, batch animation tools... there's enough in IFX2 to keep you very creatively busy for a very long time, and its quality is high enough to please even the most discriminating broadcast client.

### Conclusions

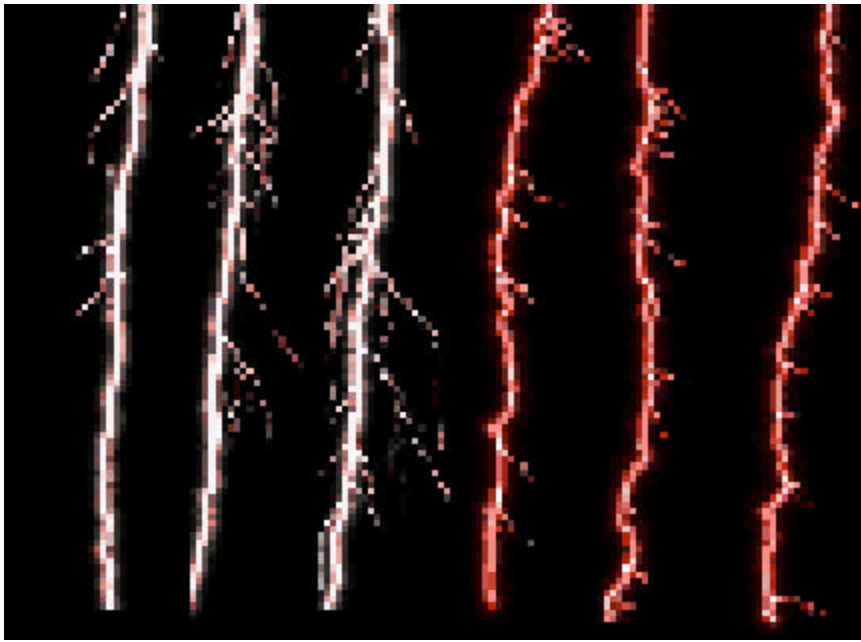
As long as your system has enough RAM (or you add the virtual memory options), you should never face the frustrating problem of having the software refuse to load a graphic (something IFX2's competition is notorious for). A separate program called "IMP" (ImageFX Multi Processor) gives you the capacity to do on-board batch processing, and as opposed to using an esoteric and techie-exclusive interface to do it, the whole thing is spelled out in plain language on an intuitive interface. The design of IMP is extremely elegant, and it automatically generates Animations (loop toggleable), single frames, or 24bit frames as a target. Added to this is the capacity of another module, AutoFX, that will apply any and all preset effects to any file you choose, and which

also allows automatic batching.

I want to highly praise this software and also to thank Nova Design for sticking with the Amiga in their development instead of jumping ship (as some others seem to have done early on). To mention some non-Amiga wares as comparisons, ImageFX 2.0 is like PhotoShop/Fractal Painter for the Amiga video artist and animator. This is software the quality of which is keeping the Amiga alive and jumpin', and I choose it as the BEST (!) Amiga image manipulation software on the market. It sets new standards that the competition is going to have to struggle long and hard to begin to match. If you are an Amiga artist or animator and you don't have IFX2 in your kit of tools, you must be interested in less than the best there is. I choose IFX2 as one of the very best Amiga products of 1994.

**Image FX 2.0 MSLP: \$349.95  
(\$124.95 upgrade cost to previous  
registered users)  
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**Figure 5 (top).** You can almost hear the crackle of this IFX2 lightning.  
**Figure 6 (bottom).** The modular IFX2 Interface.

the preview mode can be addressed as grayscale, color, dithered color, and HAM (with a special "Lo-Res Only" option added). IFX2 allows you to truly tailor its use to your own unique Amiga specifications, and does so in clearly understandable language.

#### IFX2 Prefs Requester

The IFX2 image manipulation engine is driven by the selections you choose in its special Prefs section, a very complete screen in itself that has an amazing array of options and checkoffs. A simple mouse

click gets you there at any time, so if your machine configuration changes, you can simply change and save the new preferences. The only selection that I miss having a go at is one that would allow more than a single printout at a time, but everything else is here, including preview options like choosing a scanner (Epson, IVFG, or VLAB), Printer (Prefs 1 or 2, PostScript, or Primera), Load/Save hotkeys, and (my favorite) selecting how many levels of Undo you want to have. All of the Pref changes can be saved out, so that they become the default next time you boot up. Another

dozen check-off options (like saving thumbnails with the file) and toggling coordinates on are also included. There's even a separate area where you can enable virtual memory, including whatever hard disk partition is to be used for it. Both the screen preview modes and the final render modes can be saved out here as well. You want to use another file requester when loading or saving files? How about choosing from ASL standard or thumbnail included, and even having the option to use the ASL file or font requester when it comes to font directories?

#### Painting and Amazing Flare Effects

IFX2 has the best flare options of any Amiga software, and that includes LightWave. And remember, IFX2 allows you to preview every effect before you apply it, including interactively moving the flare parameters and radii in the preview stamps. The added options make flare creation limitless as far as variety goes. Under "Effects", there are both Radial Star and Lens Flares. Radial Stars have options that include adjusting the number of star "points" from 1 to 90, altering the thickness, angle, and color of the points. The points can be straight, taper in/out, or act as flares. There's a whole separate list of sliders for adjusting the corona glows. At first glance, lens Flare creation seems a little less complex, but it can be just as variable. Anamorphic stretches can be added and the radius/brightness altered. And then there's a little line at the bottom of the Lens Flare requester that says "Artifacts", which opens a whole separate list of goodies. Spots, diagonal, vertical, and horizontal streaks, hexagons, rainbows, dots, rings,.. they're all here waiting to be explored (remember before we even heard of lens Flares?).

One of the neatest new options is the creation of Lightning, so neat that you'll have a hard time not overusing it at first. Yes, Norbert, IFX2 has a true lightning bolt generator with so many options you may stall out for weeks just playing with this attribute alone. You can adjust the strength, size, and coloration of the bolts, and saving a bunch out as animated single frames opens up a wealth of additional possibilities.

#### Painting

IFX2 is one of the most versatile painting utilities that the Amiga can boast, and much of that is based upon its new "PaintFX", one of the choices in the Special

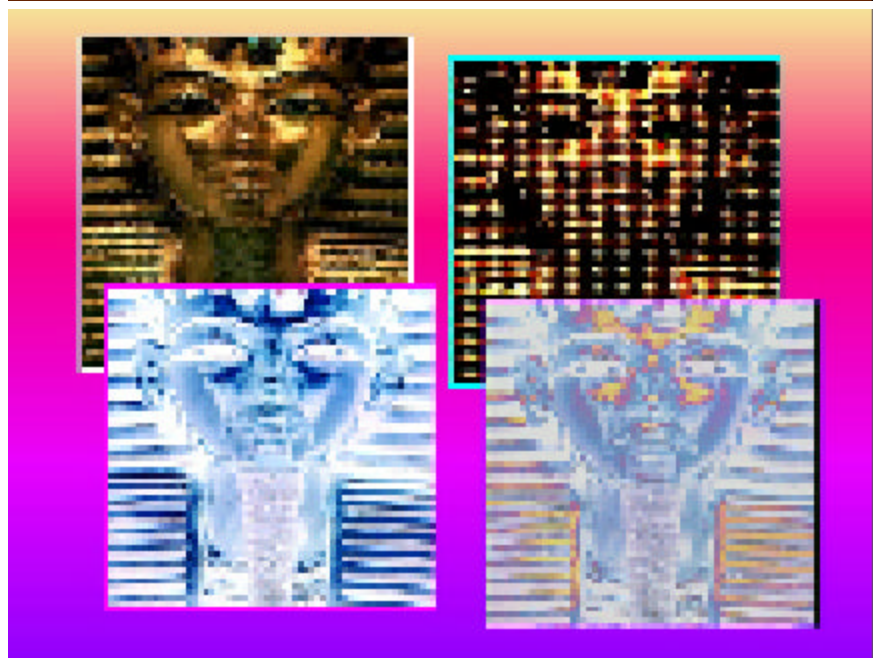
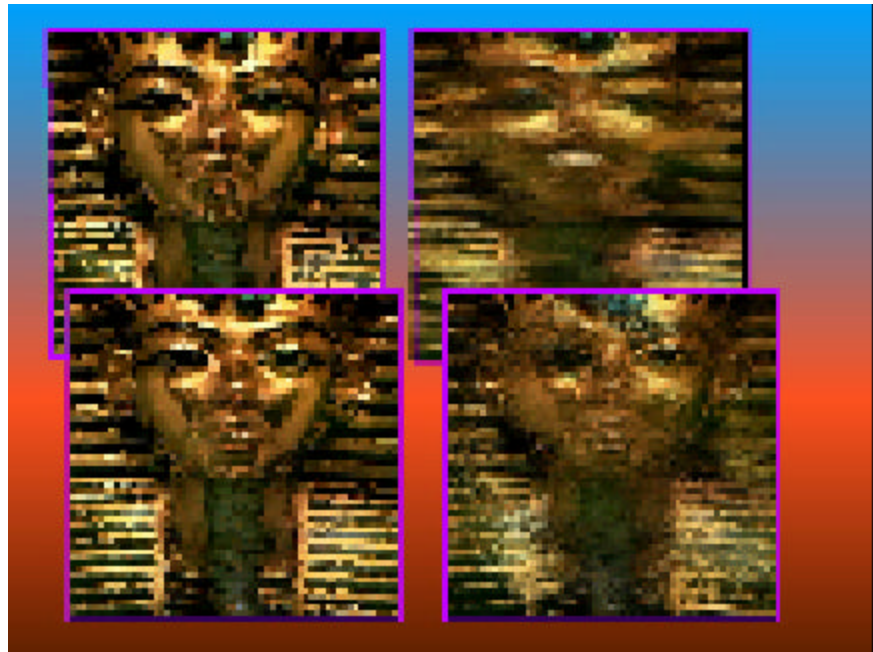
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tions and color depths, GRASP/GL and DL animation frames (MS-DOS); SGI RGB, WaveFront, and Softimage (Silicon Graphics); MPEG, X-Windows, Abekas 960, Sun Raster, and even Commodore-64 Koala pad output files (if you're old enough to remember this format).

How about vastly improved font handling? The only attribute missing from this reworked option is the inability to import fonts from other than the native font directory. Otherwise, there is more than the usual number of options here. One of my favorites is the ability to import and export large blocks of text that you may have saved out in ASCII from your word processor. As an aid in the production of quality text slides and graphics, IFX2 has a special toggle that allows you to anti-alias the imported fonts, necessary in the case of jaggy bitmaps, though it's advisable to use the vector type fonts whenever possible. Everything is available at a glance in IFX2's "text generator" requester: Bold, Italic, Underline, Remapping the font colors, adding an "Extra Border", Anti-aliasing, and justification. In addition, IFX2 has a work area in this same space that allows you to add multiple lines of text that you can store on screen, accessing each as your needs dictate. This becomes important in text slides, because often it is the designer's need to use different fonts on interweaved lines of text. Any effect or texture or distortion that can be applied to the graphic can be applied to the text brush as well, giving you all sorts of unique looks.

**Interactive Previews...  
the industry standard revisited on  
the Amiga**

Applying an IFX2 Effect, Hook, or Distort to a graphic can take a comparatively long time, especially when it represents a complicated list of options. IFX2's competition makes you wait until the effect is applied before you can view the results and then you have to undo them if they aren't to your liking. With IFX2, when an alteration is about to be applied to either the whole image, a selected region, or even a grabbed brush (including a text brush) two associated postage stamp sized views pop up next to your choices. The top one represents the graphic selected before the effect, and the other a comparison after the effect. Often the top view can also be interactively manipulated as well, which causes the numeric sliders to move in turn. As you alter the parameters either interactively or with the associated sliders and choose "preview" (the second postage



**Figure 3 (top). Four IFX2 Distorts: Swirl, Wave, Punch, Polar Blur.  
Figure 4 (bottom). Four ARexx examples: Disperse, halftone, Negative, and Solarize.**

stamp sized view), the alterations become visible, allowing you a full view of what will become the final image. This option alone will save you mega amounts of time and frustration in the manipulation of your images. This feature emulates one found on high end image manipulation programs on other platforms, like Adobe PhotoShop on the Mac.

In IFX2, images are manipulated on a separate "preview" screen, different from their final rendering. Both the Preview screen and final renders may be targeted to standard Amiga, Amiga 1.3, DCTV,

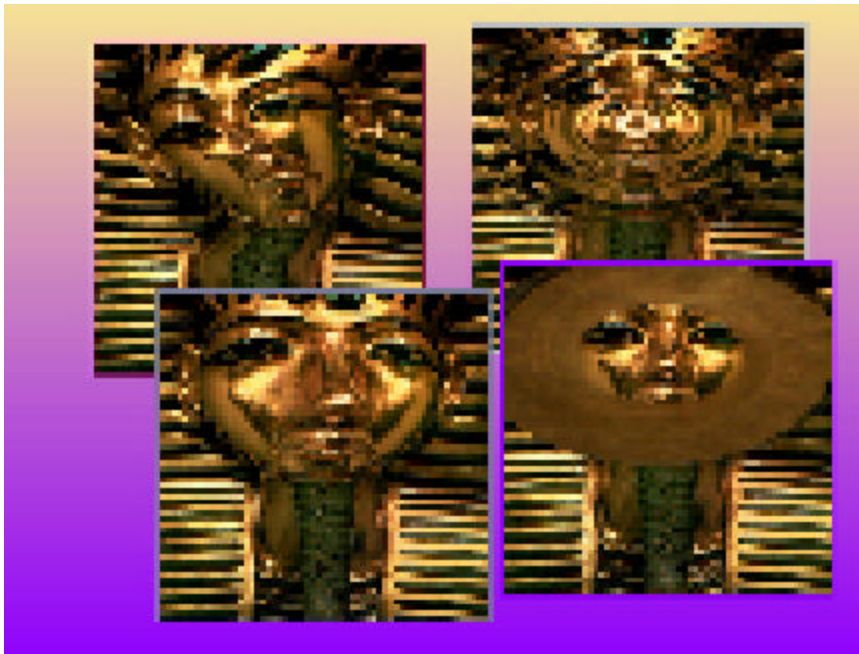
OpalVision, EGS, and "Foreign" selections (the last represents other boards like the Retina). What's useful about this approach is that even the Preview screen can be set up in various Amiga modes, AGA modes, DCTV, OpalVision, "SuperAmiga" modes, or simply at the resolution of the WorkBench screen. Each situation can vary, depending upon the configuration of your system. As an OpalVision owner, I was excited to be able to select the Opal option and see the IFX2 menu superimpose itself over the 24bit OpalVision screen in Preview mode. As part of the process, selections for



# ImageFX 2.0

by R. Shamms Mortier

Has this edition  
of ImageFX  
become king of  
the mountain?



**Figure 1. Four Painting Effects applied (L-R, T-B) in IFX2 to the Tut image: Brushstroke, Eye, Dot, Smoke.**

ImageFX 2.0 is the most significant upgrade that any Amiga image processing program has gone through in years. Has this edition of ImageFX become king of the mountain, leaving its competition gasping for air on the dizzying heights? My answer is "yes", but read on and allow me to explain why.

## The IFX interface

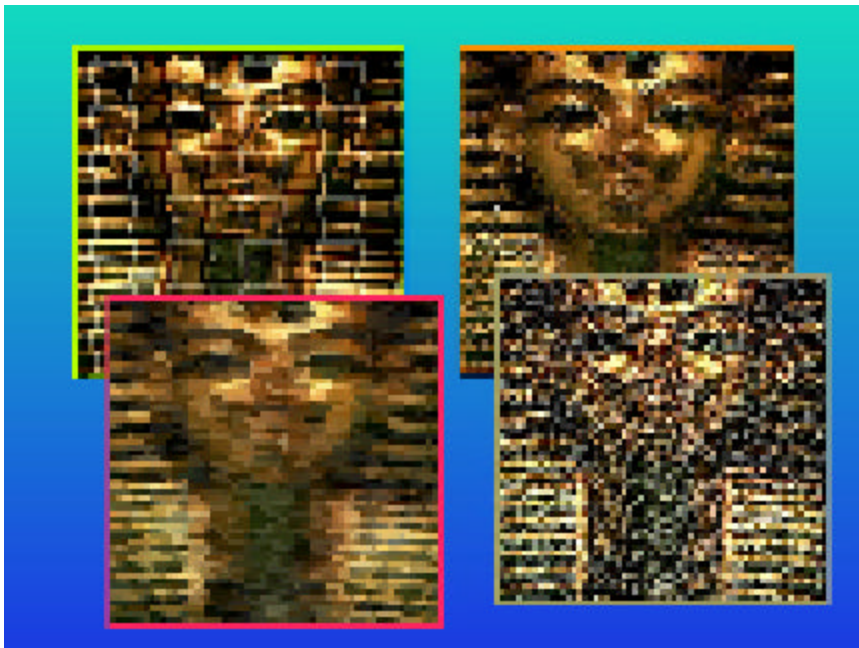
ImageFX 2.0 uses five separate modular screens: Scanner, Palette, Toolbox, Render, and Print and as many graphic controls spread among these screens as any

professional or playful Amiga user could ever hope to encounter. There is no need to search for hidden esoteric buttons or bland verbal commands, as all of ImageFX identifiable graphic toggles and switches are clearly labeled as to what they do. There are also other little things in the interface that wind up being not inconsequential to professional users. A case in point is the way that IFX addresses the resizing of targeted graphics. Several options are included that are unique to this software alone, like its ability to change the targeted

structure from pixels to "ruled" units, a mathematical comparison of height/width increments. There are also size presets for various resolution applications, from a preset for the FireCracker and Super VGA options to all of the standard NTSC and PAL modes. When it comes to cropping, everything is set before you on an interactive graphics screen as opposed to a separate screen that has to be accessed. That, in fact, is the major advantage that IFX2 offers all around, a graphics display that can be accessed by simple and clear choices.

## IFX2 Direct Hardware support

IFX2 supports all of the Amiga 24-bit environments and than some, including all of the Amiga AGA modes. It has support for the Epson 300/600/800 Scanners and also the VLAB-YC. My tests were an Amiga 2000 (with OpalVision), a 3000T (in standard resolutions), and a 4000 (with AGA modes addressed). In all situations, IFX2 worked flawlessly. Not only does it render very fast to the OpalVision hardware, but you can even choose to have IFX come up with the full Opal screen in the preview mode as well. Every Opal owner is going to lust to add this software to their Opal kits. As an owner of a Primera Pro color printer, I am also happy to see Primera support added to IFX. To access the Pro version of the printer (300 x 600), you have to use the Pro driver that comes with the printer. DPS PAR (Professional Animation Recorder) users will be happy to learn that IFX can now convert images to that format. There is also support for PICT vector and JPEG (for the Macintosh user or Mac emulator owner); PIC (in all resolu-



**Figure 2. Four more Effects: Bricks, Crystallize, Straw, and Dragon Scales.**