reverse. The interface is very intuitive and easy to figure out. Searching has a conventional Find or Find/Replace for single words without wild card support.

Room for Improvement

I have already mentioned that it is a mistake to deem FinalData any sort of real database manager, but notwithstanding the probability that FinalData will never grow up to be a real database manager, it occupies a useful niche in the Amiga market. Its ease of use and short learning curve will probably meet with more approval than would a full list of powerful but hard to master and therefore unused true database features.

I would prefer to call FinalData a list or table processor, not a database manager. I doubt most individuals or even most small businesses really need a full featured database manager. People who do need an Amiga database manager program should use Oxxi's Superbase Professional. I predict that people who have both products will find themselves using FinalData a lot more than they expect, however, because it is so convenient and pleasant to use for less complex jobs. There are a few features that FinalData should not have been without, however.

There are no hard-wired features to perform a complex logical find nor are there wild card searches. There really ought to be a way to construct a report to be displayed in a separate window of things like, say, every record between July 1, 1994 and October 10, 1994 where the last name begins with ''R'' and the zipcode is 87106 or 87108.

This is the way a database manager ought to work, even if limited to only one table at a time, and why I state that FinalData, is not at present close to being a database manager. With judicious sorting and/or ARexx programming, most of these queries could be accomplished, but it would have been better to have more built-in features for searches, queries and reports. Another glaring omission is an UNDO button. Most program preferences, but oddly, not screen colors may be user-set. Finally printing leaves a lot to be desired. SoftWood needs to give it a driver that will allow proportional fonts to print, aligned properly, while retaining the option of printing in speedy, monospaced courier.

Conclusions

I really like FinalData for what it is, even though I disagree that it is a database manager program as SoftWood claims. Because of my experience with real database managers and how hard they are to master, I find FinalData a real joy to use. It is just right for almost anything I need to do in the way of maintaining lists of people or things. I'm going to have fun writing ARexx routines to take care of the things that were not built in, and I expect that most of the needs I may have to relate two or more tables or to construct complex queries and reports will be met by ARexx quite handily.

FinalData will most likely never have the robust system, network, access, and data safeguards of a true database manager, but then on my single user system that would be overkill, anyway. At a fraction of their cost and with a minuscule learning curve in comparison to its big brothers, FinalData fills an important need and makes a useful addition to the family of SoftWood products.

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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. Ad 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 buzz-word 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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