

## **GIF Construction Set for Windows by Alchemy Mindworks Inc.**

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**The Unisys GIF Tax**

Work on this application was started some months before the surprise announcement by CompuServe and Unisys that Unisys held a patent on the compression algorithm used by GIF files and would be demanding a royalty on commercial applications which use GIF files. The registration fee for this application includes a payment to Unisys. Note that the Unisys patent applies to software which reads and writes GIF files, not to the GIF files themselves. It is our understanding that you are free to use files created or modified with this software in any form you choose without paying Unisys.

## **Introduction**

GIF Construction Set for Windows is a powerful collection of tools to work with multiple-block GIF files. It will allow you to assemble GIF files containing image blocks, plain text blocks, comment blocks and control blocks. It includes facilities to manage palettes and merge multiple GIF files together. It will make the extensions of the GIF specification work for you. Among its other functions, GIF Construction Set for Windows can:

- Create Netscape animations.
- Create transparent GIF files.
- Create interlaced GIF files.
- Add, edit and delete comment blocks.
- Add non-destructive text to images as plain text blocks.
- Create multiple-image GIF files
- Serve as a fully-compliant Windows GIF viewer application.
- Be a GIF viewer "helper" application for a World Wide Web browser or Mosaic client.

You can use GIF Construction Set for Windows to create and modify GIF files with as many blocks as you require.

GIF Construction Set for Windows requires a minimum of four megabytes of memory to run reliably, with eight megabytes preferable. Larger images may require more memory still.

## Blocks in GIF Files

A GIF file usually consists of two blocks, to wit, a header and an image. However, the structure defined by the GIF 89a specification allows for GIF files which contain multiple images, and several additional optional block types. These types are:

- **Comment blocks**, which can include text describing the image in question, defining its creator or copyright status or anything else you want to say about it. Comment blocks are not displayed as part of a GIF file.
- **Plain text blocks**, which specify text to be overlaid on an image. The position and colour of the text can be defined. Unlike merely adding text to an image with a paint program, plain text blocks don't damage the underlying image.
- **Control blocks**, which define image transparency and allow for user input. The transparency field of a control block will let you specify that one colour in an image or a colour used by the text in a plain text block is to be regarded as transparent by a GIF viewer, allowing the underlying image to be visible wherever it occurs.
- **Application blocks**, which allow private application data to be included in a GIF file. Application blocks can't be created or edited with GIF Construction Set for Windows , although they will be preserved if you open a GIF file which contains them.

Every GIF file begins with a header block, which defines the size of the screen the GIF files should be displayed on if possible, and an optional global palette. It's important to understand how palettes work in GIF files. A palette defines the colours to be used by any images and plain text blocks in a GIF file. A global palette, defined by the header block of a GIF file, pertains to all the images in the file. Alternately, individual image blocks are permitted to have palettes of their own, called local palettes.

Because most display devices are colour mapped, and can only work with one palette at a time, attempting to display multiple GIF images, each with its own local palette, will usually leave you with something that looks like bad abstract art or the aftermath of an all you can eat spaghetti dinner. As such, multiple image GIF files should have all their images referenced to the global palette of the file unless you have a compelling reason to do otherwise. GIF Construction Set for Windows includes facilities to remap and dither images to a global palette.

GIF Construction Set for Windows will let you open an existing GIF file or create a new one and add blocks, modify the various data fields of blocks and delete blocks. In the case of image blocks, it offers a number of image processing options to make assembling multiple image GIF files from a number of discrete images as practical as possible.

## **Running GIF Construction Set for Windows**

When you initially boot up GIF Construction Set for Windows , you'll see a list of all the GIF files in the \GIFCON directory of your hard drive. You can open a GIF file either by double clicking on one of the names in the list, or by selecting Open from the File menu. You can navigate to a different directory or drive either by double clicking on the drive and directory entries in the list of the GIF Construction Set for Windows application window or through the File Open dialog.

If you click once on the name of a GIF file which has a Graphic Workshop thumbnail associated with it, you'll see a small version of the GIF file's first image in the application window of GIF Construction Set for Windows. Thumbnails will be discussed in greater detail later in this document.

When you open a GIF file, the main application window of GIF Construction Set for Windows will list each of the blocks in the GIF file, beginning with the header. Clicking once on an image block will display a thumbnail for it. Double clicking on any block that GIF Construction Set for Windows recognizes will call up a dialog to edit it. You can also edit a block by clicking on it once to select it and then clicking on the Edit button in the GIF Construction Set for Windows button bar.

GIF Construction Set for Windows does not allow application blocks or blocks of unknown types to be edited.

## Editing the Header Block

You can modify the following fields of the header block of a GIF file:

- **Screen width and screen depth:** These are the dimensions in pixels of the screen the GIF file would like to be displayed on. They can be any value greater than zero. Note that the screen dimensions do not affect the dimensions of images displayed from a GIF file, but they may affect where on your screen the images are placed in a fully compliant GIF viewer.

- **Background:** The background is the colour of the area around the images to be displayed if the images in question don't fill your screen. The background is actually a number drawn from the current global colour palette... if the palette is changed, the actual colour displayed may change too. To change the background colour, click on the colour button in the Edit Header dialog and select a new colour. The number in the Background colour button is the actual palette index being used.

- **Global palette:** The global palette flag tells GIF viewers whether a GIF file includes a global palette. If you change this flag, GIF Construction Set for Windows will look at the GIF file you're working on to see if there are images which expect a global palette and prompt you accordingly. In most applications of GIF files, it's desirable to have a global palette.

You can save palettes from GIF Construction Set for Windows to disk files and load them in as new global or local palettes. The size of the current palette is shown to the right of the Load button.

The Sorted flag of Edit Header box allows you to set the state of the sorted palette flag in the header of GIF files. This flag has no affect on how GIF Construction Set for Windows displays images... it may be of importance to other applications which read your GIF files.

## Editing Image Blocks

The Edit Image dialog includes the following fields:

- **Left and top:** These fields determine where the image in question will be displayed on your screen relative to the upper left corner. The values are in pixels.

- **Interlaced:** This flag determines whether the image in question will be stored interlaced or normally. If you have enabled the Display Interlaced item in the Setup dialog this will affect how GIF Construction Set for Windows displays images. It will also change how images appear in applications which display them one line at a time. Interlaced images are commonly used in World Wide Web pages.

- **Local palette:** You can enable a local palette for any image block in a GIF file. By default, the palette for the image in question will be used. You can also load and save palettes, as in the Edit Header field. Be careful doing this... you might wind up with an image having very weird colours. The Load and Save buttons will only be active if you have switched on the local palette option. The number of colours in the current image palette will be displayed below the Local Palette switch.

The View button of the Edit Header dialog will display the image in question. Specifically, it will display it against a solid colour background -- grey by default -- with a set of purple guides indicating where the screen area defined by the screen width and screen depth fields of the current header block would fall. This assumes that your screen area and image are smaller than your screen. The background colour can be defined through the GIF Construction Set for Windows Setup dialog, discussed elsewhere in this document.

Note that the View buttons in the edit dialogs will not display an entire complex GIF file. They'll only display the current block. If your image does not display correctly, please read the section of this document that deals with the About dialog for a discussion of Windows screen drivers. Hit Esc or click the right button of your mouse to exit the View mode.

### **Editing Comment Blocks**

A comment block consists entirely of text. The Edit Comment Block dialog is a text editing window in which you can add, modify and delete the text of a comment block. Under GIF Construction Set for Windows , a comment block can include up to 32,767 characters.

The Format button of the Edit Comment Block dialog will toggle between displaying text in the conventional chunky Windows font and displaying it in a monospaced font. The former is better for editing a lot of text, while the latter is useful if you'd like to create formatted comment blocks.



## Editing Plain Text Blocks

Plain text blocks consist of text and some information about how to display it. The text can be edited the same way comment block text is handled. The following fields define how plain text blocks will be displayed:

- **Text left and text top:** These fields define where the text will appear on your screen, relative to the upper left corner of the viewing area. These values are defined in pixels.
- **Grid wide and grid deep:** These fields define a rectangle in which your text will be drawn. A grid ten wide and twelve deep would allow for twelve lines of up to ten characters each. Text which doesn't fit in the grid defined by a plain text block is not displayed.
- **Cell wide and cell deep:** These fields define the dimensions of the characters used to display text. In theory, a GIF viewer should look at these fields and create a suitable monospaced font to display the text in question. In most cases this is not so -- GIF Construction Set for Windows included. Most GIF viewers will use a font which is eight pixels wide and anywhere from eight to 32 pixels deep.
- **Foreground and background:** These are the colours used to display the text in question. Note that if a plain text block is preceded by a control block which defines a transparent colour, one of these colours can become transparent.
- **Block title:** This is the text which appears in the main block list of GIF Construction Set. The Write Directory Block option in Setup must be On for this field to be active.

The View button will display the image preceding the plain text block being edited with the text in question superimposed over it. Note that the View buttons in the edit dialogs will not display an entire complex GIF file. They'll only display the current block. If your image does not display correctly, please read the section of this document that deals with the About dialog for a discussion of Windows screen drivers. Hit Esc or click the right button of your mouse to exit the View mode.

## Editing Control Blocks

A control block includes the following fields:

- **Transparent colour:** If this switch is turned on, one of the global palette colours in subsequent image or plain text blocks will be regarded as being transparent by GIF Construction Set for Windows when you view a complete GIF file. This means that rather than displaying areas of this colour, it will allow whatever is underneath the displayed image or text to show through. You can select which colour is to be transparent with the colour button to the right of this switch.

- **Wait for user input:** If this switch is turned on, a GIF viewer displaying your GIF file will display the next image or plain text block and pause for user input. User input is usually a key press or a mouse click.

- **Delay:** This is the number of seconds a GIF viewer will pause after displaying the next image or plain text block. If Wait for User Input is also enabled, the delay can be interrupted by a key press.

- **Remove by:** This tells a GIF viewer what to do with an image after it has been displayed. Be careful of the Previous Image option... some GIF viewers have problems with this if you ask a really big image to be removed this way.

The View button will display the image preceding the control block being edited with any transparent effects that you've defined. Note that the View buttons in the edit dialogs will not display an entire complex GIF file. They'll only display the current block. If your image does not display correctly, please read the section of this document that deals with the About dialog for a discussion of Windows screen drivers. Hit Esc or click the right button of your mouse to exit the View mode.

**Editing Loop Blocks**

A loop block includes one field, to define the number of times the images in the GIF file in question will repeat. Note that a Loop block will always appear as the second block in a GIF file, no matter where you insert it. Only one Loop block can appear in a GIF file.

## Inserting Blocks

You can add blocks to a GIF file with the Insert button of the GIF Construction Set for Windows button bar. A dialog will appear to allow you to select the type of block you wish to insert. Inserted blocks are always inserted immediately after the currently selected block.

If you attempt to insert an image block into an existing GIF file, a dialog will appear prompting you for the file to insert. Images can be drawn from files in the following formats:

- PNG:** These are compressed graphics created to replace GIF.
- MacPaint:** Monochrome image files from Macintosh systems
- GEM/IMG:** Primarily used by Ventura Publisher
- PC Paintbrush PCX:** The native file format of Z-Soft's PC Paintbrush software
- CompuServe GIF:** Among the most widely used PC image file formats
- TIFF:** Supports them all, including Group III, IV and LZW
- Deluxe Paint/Amiga IFF/LBM:** Only supports pure IFF files and Deluxe Paint LBM files
- PC Paint Pictor PIC:** Supports them all, including high colour PIC
- Truevision Targa:** Supports all Targa files
- Windows /OS2 BMP/DIB:** Supports all BMP files, including those from OS/2
- Windows 3 RLE:** Supports most Windows RLE files
- Microsoft Paint MSP:** This is the old monochrome paint format from Windows 2
- Halo CUT:** This is the very obscure Halo cut format
- PFS:First Publisher ART:** Only supports uncompressed ART files
- JPEG JPG:** All JPEG files will be displayed in 256 colours
- Sun Raster RAS:** These are files from Sun unix workstations
- HRZ SSTV:** These are high colour slow scan television files
- WordPerfect Graphics WPG:** Only supports bitmapped WPG files. If your WPG files do not import they are vector files, and are not supported by GIF Construction Set for Windows .

Note that if you import an image from a GIF file using the Insert function, the first image in the file will be read, even if the file actually contains multiple images. Use the Merge command of GIF Construction Set for Windows, discussed later in this document, for an alternate approach to importing images from GIF files.

If you attempt to insert an image which has a different palette from the current global palette of your GIF file, a dialog will appear asking how you'd like to handle the new image's palette. These are the available options:

- **Use a local palette for this image.** If you do this, no colour shifts or dithering effects will be introduced into the image, but very nasty things may happen if you attempt to display this image concurrently with other images in the file. You can't use plain text blocks with local palette images. Local palettes are usually not a very good idea for conventional display applications. If you attempt to import a true colour image with this option, it will be dithered to a 256-colour image internally.
- **Use a local grey palette for this image.** The image will be converted to grey scale and installed with a local palette. All of the foregoing considerations for local palettes still apply.
- **Remap this image to the global palette.** This is a good choice for mechanical images... drawings and such... and a really bad choice for photographs. Each colour in the source image will be replaced by the closest match from the global palette. This will usually make photographs look posterized.
- **Dither this image to the global palette.** This is a good choice for photographs. It will give you the best colour match... and usually the most attractive results... with a slight loss in detail resolution.

- **Use this image as the global palette.** This option will only be available if no other image blocks currently exist in your GIF file, such as when you create a new file. The global palette for the header of the file will be drawn from your imported image. If you attempt to import a true colour image with this option, it will be dithered to a 256-colour image internally.

- **Use it as is.** No checking or correction will be performed, and the colours in your imported image will fall where they may. This option is useful if you know that certain colours in your imported image correspond to colours in the current global palette, such as for images created to be overlays with transparent colours. Plan on radical colour shifts and Andy Warhol's worst nightmare if this is not the case.

If you insert other types of blocks... specifically control, comment or plain text blocks... default blocks will be created which you can subsequently edit, as has been discussed.

The 15-bit Quantize option will produce more attractive images if your palette selection requires colour matching and remapping. However, it's also pretty slow, especially on older machines.

### **Merging Blocks**

The Merge button in the GIF Construction Set for Windows main window will allow you to import all the blocks in a GIF file... except for the header block... into the current file. They will be inserted starting just after the currently selected block. Image blocks will be handled using the same logic discussed previously for inserting individual image blocks... a dialog may appear prompting you to choose a strategy for handling palette conflicts.

You can use the Merge function to import selected images from a multiple-image GIF file. Merge the whole file and delete the blocks you don't need.

**Deleting Blocks**

You can delete any block save for the header by selecting it and clicking on the Delete button. Note that once a block is deleted, it's gone for good.

## **Viewing GIF Files**

The View button in the main window of GIF Construction Set for Windows will display a GIF file using a fully compliant viewing function. The viewing area, as defined by the screen dimensions of the file header, will be centred in the main window of your screen if it's bigger than your screen. Each displayable block will appear in the order it's defined in the GIF file. You can terminate the display any time you like by clicking the right button of your mouse or hitting the Esc key.

The background of the view mode may appear dithered on systems with colour mapped screen drivers. This can be changed using the Setup dialog of GIF Construction Set for Windows, as discussed elsewhere in this document.

If the screen dimensions defined by a GIF file's header block are greater than the dimensions of your screen, scroll bars will appear to allow you to pan over the displayed image.



**Exporting GIF Files**

The Export function in the File menu will create a new, single-image GIF file which contains all the display elements of a multiple image GIF file. It will export what you would see on your screen if you were to click on View. Note that it will ignore image blocks which would be removed to the background image.

### **Creating New GIF Files**

To create a blank GIF file, select New from the File menu. A blank GIF file always includes a header block. You can add blocks to a new GIF file with the Insert and Merge functions.

## **Opening and Saving GIF Files**

Any GIF 87a or 89a file can be opened into GIF Construction Set for Windows. Files created with GIF 87a headers will be converted internally to GIF 89a files. As discussed previously, you can open a GIF file either by selecting the Open item from the File menu of GIF Construction Set for Windows or by double clicking on the name of a GIF file in the main list of the application window. It's possible that extremely complex GIF files... those with lots of blocks... may not open completely. See the section of this document dealing with the Setup dialog for information about getting around this.

The Save and Save As functions of the File menu will save your current GIF file to disk. All GIF files written by GIF Construction Set for Windows will have GIF 89a headers.

If you enable the Write Thumbnail option of the Save As dialog, each file written by GIF Construction Set for Windows will be accompanied by a thumbnail. Thumbnails are stored in files with the extension .THN. As such, the thumbnail for PICTURE.GIF would be called PICTURE.THN. The thumbnails created by GIF Construction Set for Windows are compatible with those used by Graphic Workshop for Windows and other Alchemy Mindworks applications which support thumbnails.

Thumbnails will appear in the application window of GIF Construction Set for Windows if you select a GIF file prior to opening it. A thumbnail always represents the first image in a multiple-image GIF file.

Unregistered copies of GIF Construction Set for Windows will add a comment block to any GIF file you save. This comment block will not appear once you register GIF Construction Set for Windows.

### **Cutting, Copying and Pasting Blocks**

You can cut or copy the current block of a GIF file to the Windows clipboard using the appropriate items of the Edit menu. A block copied to the Windows clipboard will have its block structure stored as hexadecimal data defined in OEM text. Plain text and comment blocks will have their text stored as conventional Windows text. Image blocks will have their image information stored as conventional Windows device-independent bitmaps.

It's a really bad idea to mess with the OEM text objects copied from GIF Construction Set for Windows and then paste them back into GIF files.

You can copy a bitmap from another application onto the clipboard as a device-independent bitmap and paste it into a GIF file through GIF Construction Set for Windows. It will be given an image block on the way in, which you can subsequently edit if you like.

**Closing GIF Files**

If you select the Close item of the File menu of GIF Construction Set for Windows, the current GIF file will be closed and the list in the main application window will revert to showing you the names of all the GIF files in your current directory. Opening a new GIF file automatically closes the current one.

## The Setup Dialog

The GIF Construction Set for Windows Setup dialog can be called up through the Setup item of the File menu. It includes the following fields.

- **Display Interlaced:** If this switch is enabled, image blocks with interlaced images will appear in interlaced order.
- **Draw Frame Guides:** If this switch is enabled, purple guides will appear to define the image area of a GIF file being viewed using the View buttons of the edit dialogs. Guides do not appear in the main View function.
- **Use Image Offsets:** If this item is not enabled, images will be displayed centred on your screen, rather than where the position fields of their image blocks say they're supposed to be. There are few good reasons for doing this.
- **Dither View Background:** This item is ignored on systems with screen drivers that can display more than 256 colours. If your current Windows screen driver can display 256 or fewer colours, setting this switch on will cause the background of the main View mode to be dithered to approximate the setting of the background field of the header block of the GIF file being displayed. Setting it off will cause the closest match from the current global palette to be used, allowing for Windows' somewhat funky palette management strategy. See the section of this document which deals with the About dialog of GIF Construction Set for Windows for information about how to determine the number of colours your current Windows screen driver can display.
- **True Transparency:** If this item is enabled and you're using a Windows screen driver with better than 256 colours, you'll see transparent GIF files displayed correctly. If it's disabled -- or if you have a sixteen- or 256-colour Windows screen driver installed in your system -- GIF Construction Set will use Windows' GDI calls to handle transparency, which are less than wholly reliable. They are somewhat faster, however. If you find the length of time it takes GIF Construction Set to display transparent elements in GIF files excessive, try disabling this feature. This switch will be ignored if you have a sixteen- or 256-colour driver installed.
- **Dither contrast and dither brightness:** These values only affect monochrome dithering in the image block import function. If you attempt to import a colour image into a monochrome GIF file, it may be dithered to two colours, depending on the palette option you select. These fields can be used to fine tune the dithering.
- **Interlace Delay:** This is the number of milliseconds GIF Construction Set waits after it display one line of an interlaced image.
- **Maximum blocks:** When a GIF file is opened in GIF Construction Set for Windows, a fixed number of blocks will be allocated for it. If you exceed this number, no new blocks will be accepted. The default value, 64, will suffice for all but the most complex GIF files. You can increase this number if you run out of blocks or if GIF Construction Set for Windows refuses to open a very complex GIF file because it has more than 64 blocks. Note that changes to this field will not take effect until the next time you open or create a GIF file. If you run out of blocks you must save your current GIF file, change this field and open the file again.

Setting the Maximum Blocks field higher than it needs be will tie up excessive memory and probably slow down Windows and applications running under it.

**Registration name:** You can turn a shareware copy of GIF Construction Set for Windows into a registered copy by entering your name in the registration field and clicking on Accept. A dialog will appear prompting you for the key word provided with your receipt for

registration. Make sure you type in your name and key word exactly as it is on your receipt -- case and punctuation matter.

Once you have successfully registered GIF Construction Set for Windows, you will no longer see the beg notice when the application terminates and the extra comment block added when you save a file will not appear. In addition, you'll have great karma and our leather winged demon of the night won't regard you as a handy source of protein... something well worth considering.

### **The About Dialog and Windows Screen Drivers**

The About button in the button bar of GIF Construction Set for Windows will display a beg notice for unregistered versions and a grey dialog with a unicorn for registered versions. The latter dialog will also tell you several useful things about your computer, such as the amount of memory Windows thinks is free and the number of colours your current Windows screen driver can display without dithering. The latter is very important... if you attempt to view a 256-colour GIF file on a system with a sixteen-colour driver installed, the resulting images will look posterized and ugly. This does not mean that GIF Construction Set for Windows is misbehaving... you must update your Windows screen driver to see 256-colour images correctly.

If you have an unregistered copy of GIF Construction Set for Windows, you can see the latter dialog by holding down the shift key and clicking on the Ok button in the beg notice dialog. You should do this if you are not seeing 256-colour images displayed correctly to check if the problem is with your screen driver.

As an aside, this works the other way, too... should you have reason to wish to see the unregistered beg notice dialog after you've registered, hold down the shift key and click on the Ok button.



## Secrets, Tricks and Common Applications

Here are a number of useful things you might want to know about using GIF Construction Set for Windows.

**Creating an animated GIF file for use with Netscape:** Netscape 2.0 includes multiple-image GIF support with looping. This will allow you to create web pages with simple animations. There are a few tricks to know if this is to work out.

Note that most of this will not work if you view your pages with other browsers -- including earlier versions of Netscape. All of the following is unofficial, and hasn't come from the good people at Netscape.

Web page animations look best when all the images in the animation have the same palette. In creating a GIF file from multiple separate images, you can achieve this by doing one of the following:

- Create a new GIF file and insert multiple image blocks. Remap all the images to the default palette. Set the appropriate default colour depth in Setup before you begin. This will usually create the most workable animations. Dither the images if they're photorealistic, or remap them if they're line art.
- Alternately, import the first image and use it as the global palette for the GIF file. Import all the subsequent images and either remap or dither them to the global palette. You can speed this process up by selecting Use This Selection for Subsequent Images when the big palette dialog makes its second appearance.

You must insert a Control block before each image in an animation for Netscape to handle its delay correctly. You can do this quickly by inserting the first Control block and configuring it appropriately. Select it and select Copy from the Edit menu. Use Ctrl V to Paste it back into the GIF file where it's needed.

To create an animation that plays continuously, insert a Loop block.

As of this writing, Netscape's command of multiple image GIF files has a few catches. Here are some of the ones you might want to keep in mind:

- The iteration count in Loop blocks is ignored by Netscape 2.0. Your animations will loop forever no matter what value you put in this field.
- If any of the cells in your animation extend outside the rectangle defined by the Screen Width and Screen Depth field in the Header block of your GIF file, Netscape will more than likely crash.
- Using cells with transparent colours or Remove By features in their control blocks may make Netscape's animation behave unpredictably.
- Netscape 2.0 pauses momentarily at the end of an animation sequence before it loops. There's nothing you can do about this.
- A web page with an animated GIF file on it will never be "done" in Netscape -- that is, the Stop button will always be active.

**Creating transparent GIF files:** A transparent GIF file is one in which an image block displays with one transparent colour. Anywhere the transparent colour exists in the image, no pixels will be painted and whatever was visible before the image appeared will show

through. To create a transparent GIF file, add a control block before the image block you wish to include transparent areas. Enable the Transparent Colour switch in the control block and set the transparent colour to correspond to the colour of the areas of the image you wish to appear transparent.

*Note. Read this. Very important. Definite demon bait if you don't. Transparent GIF files only display with their transparent elements under fully compliant GIF viewers. This includes GIF Construction Set for Windows, most World Wide Web Browsers and a limited number of other GIF viewing applications. Most applications that just display pictures will ignore transparency information in GIF files. This includes our own Graphic Workshop software, for example. If your transparent GIF files don't seem to be transparent in some applications, the problem is not with GIF Construction Set for Windows or your GIF files.*

**Creating magic graphic logos:** You can create a GIF file that has a main image and a smaller secondary logo which appears, sticks around for a moment and goes away. In addition to the main image block, you will need a control block followed by a smaller secondary image. The secondary image can have a transparent background... this looks very slick. Set the control block up with whatever transparent colour you require, a brief delay, the user input flag turned on and the Remove By field set to Previous Image.

**Creating plain text with a drop shadow:** This looks very slick. It involves two plain text blocks and two control blocks. Each of the plain text blocks should contain the same text. The second one should be slightly lower and to the right of the first one... two pixels in each direction is usually about right. The second and optionally the first plain text block should be set up so their background colours are transparent, as defined by their control blocks.

**Automatically viewing an image when it's loaded:** Hold down the shift key when you double click on a GIF file name in the main application window of GIF Construction Set for Windows and the image will be loaded and then immediately viewed.

**Using GIF Construction Set for Windows as a GIF viewer for other applications:** If you run GIFCON.EXE, the executable file for GIF Construction Set for Windows, with the path to a GIF file as its command line argument, it will automatically load the indicated file just as if you'd explicitly loaded it by clicking on it from the main application window. If you append /V to the file name, it will automatically load and view the file. If you append /V/Q to the file name, it will load the file, view it and then quit back to the calling application as soon as you hit Esc or click with the right button of your mouse. You can prevent it from quitting in this situation by holding down the shift key when you exit the view mode.

GIF Construction Set for Windows makes a powerful GIF viewer for World Wide Web browsers.

## **Contacting Alchemy Mindworks Inc.**

You can contact us by mail by writing to us at:

**Alchemy Mindworks Inc.  
P.O. Box 500  
Beeton, Ontario  
LOG 1A0  
Canada**

We will attempt to answer questions from unregistered users who write to us to the extent that their answers are needed for you to fully determine whether this software will suit your requirements.

You can reach our technical support line by phone... see the section of this document which deals with technical support.

We can also be reached through the Alchemy Mindworks bulletin board. It's available twenty-four hours a day at 1-905-936-9503. As of this writing, the protocol was 300, 1200 or 2400 baud, or 9600 baud v.32bis, eight data bits, no parity and one stop bit.

The bulletin board always has the most recent versions of all our shareware on it, plus bug fixes, drivers and other relevant information. It only exists to support Alchemy Mindworks' shareware... it does not have a general file area.

If you encounter problems with a file, you're welcome to upload the errant file to our bulletin board. Actually, you can upload any picture files you like to the board... we enjoy getting pictures.

If you have a question about GIF Construction Set for Windows, feel free to leave it on the bulletin board. We try to answer all questions within twenty-four hours. Note that you must call back to retrieve your answer... please don't ask us to phone you or to leave the answer on another bulletin board.

Our **CompuServe** address is 70451,2734. Our **Internet** e-mail address as of this writing is [alchemy@accesspt.north.net](mailto:alchemy@accesspt.north.net). We will at our discretion answer reasonable questions by e-mail. Please do not leave credit card information on the Internet.

You can find the current version of GIF Construction Set for Windows and our other applications on the **Internet** at our FTP site **ftp.mindworkshop** in the directory **/pub/alchemy**.

You can download current versions of our applications, keep up to date with version changes and find other interesting bits at our World Wide Web server **<http://www.mindworkshop.com>**

We ask that in contacting us you appreciate that we are a small company with limited resources. If you have not registered this software we will not tell you to go to hell, but please don't ask us for half an hour of free technical support. We have not built the price of technical support into the cost of GIF Construction Set for Windows, as few users require it. We believe very strongly in not making everyone pay for something that only a small group needs. If our various governments felt the same way, our various economies wouldn't be in the midst of melting down.

### **Support this Software**

If you like GIF Construction Set for Windows and find it useful, please register it. This will allow you to shut off the begin notice which appears when you exit GIF Construction Set for Windows. More to the point, though, it'll make you feel good. We've not infested GIF Construction Set for Windows with excessive beg notices, crippled it or had it verbally insult you after ten days. We trust you to register this software if you like it.

If you want to see additional features in GIF Construction Set for Windows, support it. If we had an Arcturian mega-dollar for everyone who has said they'd most certainly register one of our applications if we'd add just one more thing to it, we could buy ourselves a universe and retire.

Finally, should you fail to register this software and continue to use it, a leather winged demon of the night will tear itself, shrieking blood and fury, from the endless caverns of the nether world, hurl itself into the darkness with a thirst for blood on its slavering fangs and search the very threads of time for the throbbing of your heartbeat. Just thought you'd want to know that.

## **Technical Support**

Technical support is available at 1-905-936-9501, 10:00am to 5:00pm EST most business days. If you encounter our answering machine... it does happen occasionally... please try back later. **One of the considerations in offering very low cost software is that we are unable to return calls for technical support.**

Callers who are rude, abusive or pig-headed with our technical support staff will wind up as demon-chow. See the section on [Supporting this Software](#)

Please do not call our 800 number for technical support. The people who answer our sales line can put a credit card machine into warp drive, but they know less about software than most cats know about quantum mechanics.

We are also happy to provide you with technical support by e-mail, as discussed earlier in this document.

**Legal dogma**

Neither the author nor Alchemy Mindworks Inc. assumes responsibility for any damage or loss caused by the use of these programs, however it comes down. If you can think of a way a picture program can cause you damage or loss you've a sneakier mind than any of us.

All the registered trademarks used herein are registered to whoever it is that owns them. This notification is given in lieu of any specific list of trademarks and their owners, which would not be as inclusive and would probably take a lot longer to type.

If you register GIF Construction Set for Windows , we will assume that you are doing so having tested the shareware version and ascertained that it's suitable for your hardware and requirements. We cannot provide refunds for shareware registration if you subsequently change your mind.

The JPEG reader in IFMT.DLL is based on code from the Independent JPEG Group. Parts of the TIFF reader in IFMT.DLL is based on code by Sam Leffler.

GIF is a trademark of CompuServe.

GIF Construction Set, QuickShow, Multimedia Workshop for Windows, Pagan Daybook, Graphic Workshop, GraphSaver, Desktop Paint, Image Gallery and GrafCat are trademarks of Alchemy Mindworks Inc.

