

GIFComposer

Tomas Åkesson

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COLLABORATORS

	<i>TITLE :</i> GIFComposer		
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Contents

1	GIFComposer	1
1.1	Users guide for GIFComposer version 0.10 beta	1
1.2	Disclaimer	2
1.3	Introduction	2
1.4	Installation	2
1.5	Usage	3
1.6	ARexx interface	4
1.7	menu_muiprefs	5
1.8	saveprgsettings	5
1.9	Main Window	5
1.10	Program settings	6
1.11	Animation settings	7
1.12	Picture settings	8
1.13	A little tutorial	8
1.14	Bugs, limitations and future	8
1.15	Who's responsible	9
1.16	Thank you...	9
1.17	About MUI	10
1.18	About WhirlGIF	11
1.19	Some useful(or less) information	11
1.20	History	11
1.21	myindex	13

Chapter 1

GIFComposer

1.1 Users guide for GIFComposer version 0.10 beta

Welcome to GIFComposer, the GIF-animation creator
made by Tomas Åkesson

This is a beta version of GIFComposer, the Muified
animation-creator. The reason why it is called "beta"
is that the program is not fully finished yet as I
need to include more features, but it is usable and
do not include any bugs (I hope).

Please read this documentation through, or if you are
impatient and want to try GIFComposer directly, do it,
because it's not that hard to use.

Disclaimer & copyrights

Introduction

Features

Installation

Usage

Tutorial

ARexx interface

Info about animation-viewers

Bugs, limitations and future

History

Changes to documentation

Author

Thank you...

Written by Tomas Åkesson 3 October 1997

1.2 Disclaimer

Disclaimer

The program GIFComposer is distributed "as is" and the author will not be responsible for any damage on either you, your computer or any data. This program is used entirely on YOUR own risk.

Copyrights

GIFComposer and this manual is Copyright © 1997 by Tomas Åkesson. GIFComposer needs WhirlGIF 2.02 (not included), Copyright © 1995,1996 by Kevin Kadow.

Distribution

GIFComposer is released as Freeware. It may be copied and spread as long as you want. If you include GIFComposer in a program collection or such, like on a coverdisk for a magazine or a CD-rom collection, you should get my permission first.

Aminet and Fred Fish are hereby allowed to include GIFComposer in their collections.

1.3 Introduction

Are you creating Web-sites and do you like those little animations made from GIF-pictures?

Or are you just making GIF-animations for fun?

In any case. Are you using WhirlGIF or GIFMerge and goes crazy over the commandline usage?

This is the solution then. **MUI** is used to create a user-friendly Graphical User Interface (a window) to compose GIF-animations.

Requirements:

AmigaWorkbench 3.0 (Might work on WB 2.0 too. Haven't tested yet.)

MUI 3.8 [Information](#)

WhirlGIF 2.02 [Information](#)

An animation-viewer (optionally) [Information](#)

A picture-viewer (optionally) [Information](#)

Enough! Take a look at the [Installation](#) section now.

1.4 Installation

How to install GIFComposer

·Use the supplied installationprogram.

or

·Copy GIFComposer (and it's icon) to wherever you want.

·Copy GIFComposer.guide to your "Locale:Help" directory.

·Copy the preferred language-files to your Locale:catalogs directory.

·If you haven't got WhirlGIF, then read [this](#). If you have, then copy it to wherever you want, but I suggest you to put it in the C: directory or in the same directory as GIFComposer.

·If you want to use an Animation-viewing program with GIFComposer then read [this](#). .

·Start GIFComposer and configure GIFComposers [Program settings](#)

Then get on with the [Usage section](#). and read the [Quick Tutorial](#) if you want some leading.

1.5 Usage

Configuration

The configuration of GIFComposer is divided in three parts.

- .
 - Program settings
 - is made from the menuitem with the same name.
- Do this first, before you start using the program.
- .
 - Global animation settings
 - is made from the menuitem with the same name.
- .
 - Individual picture settings
 - is not available in this version.

Main window

Note that "bubble-help" is available for all gadgets. Just hold the mouse-pointer above the gadget you want info about and a help-bubble will show up.

Amigaguide online-help is also available, press the "Help" key on your keyboard to bring up this doc. This is the main window of GIFComposer. It consists of several parts and looks something like this(!?):

```

|-----|
|
|           Pictures in animation
|           |
|-----|-----|
| |-----| |
| |-----| |
| |-----| |
| |-----| |
|
|           Add
|           Up
|           Duplicate
|
|           Remove
|           Down
|           Options
|
| Output file:
|
|
|           Make Anim
|           View Anim

```

```

                View Picture
                |
|_____|

```

The Project menu:

```

Project
About      - Opens an info-window about GifComposer
About MUI  - Opens an info-window about MUI
-----
Quit       - Quits GIFComposer

```

The Edit menu:

```

Edit
Clear      - Clears the "Pictures.." list

```

The Settings menu:

```

Settings

    Program settings

    Global animation settings

    Local picture settings

    MUI settings
    -----

    Save Program settings

```

1.6 ARexx interface

GifComposer's arexx-port has got the name gifcomposer.x where x represents a number. This is 1 if only one Gifcomposer is running. (I'm not very good at explaining this as I'm not an Arexx-expert, if you are, you'll understand what I mean.) Usually it should be 1.

Arexx-commands available

Command	Template	Description
addtolist	FILE/A	Adds FILE to the pictures-list
clearlist		Clears the picture-list
isgif	FILE/A	Checks if FILE is a GIF-file. Returns 1 for success and 0 for fail.
makeanim		Same as the "Make Anim"-button
viewanim		Same as the "View Anim"-button
moveup		Same as the "Move Up"-button
movedown		Same as the "Move Down"-button
duplicate		Same as the "Duplicate"-button

remove		Same as the "Remove"-button
setactive	NUMBER/A	Sets which entry in the list that should be active and therefore get affected by the above commands (moveup - remove). The number 0 deactivates the list.

1.7 menu_muiprefs

Opens the MUI configuration so you may set some individual MUI-preferences for GIFComposer. This controls how the window should look and behave and other things. See the MUI documentation for more information. (If this link doesn't lead you nowhere you'll have to find the MUI-documentation by yourself, but it should work if you have installed MUI properly, with the english documentation.)

1.8 saveprgsettings

This gadget/menuitem will save the paths and commands you have entered into the **Program settings** window. The settings will be saved into a file in the ENVARC:MUI/ directory and they are read at the startup by GIFComposer.

1.9 Main Window

Gadgets in the Main window

Pictures in animation

This is the main part of GIFComposers interface. The pictures in this list are the parts of your animation. You may add, delete and duplicate pictures as well as move them up and down with the buttons below the list.

The selected picture may also be viewed with a press on the "View Picture" button.

Add

Opens up a file-requester which lets you choose one or more GIF-picture(s). It will be added to the picture list.

Up

Moves the selected picture in the list up one step.

Duplicate

Copies the selected picture and places the copy below all the others in the list.

Remove

Removes the selected picture from the list.

Down

Moves the selected picture in the list down one step.

Options

-->NOT IMPLEMENTED YET<--

Output file

Opens a filerequester and lets you choose the name your finished animation should have.

Make Anim

Creates the animation using the pictures in the pictures-list in the same order they appear, and saves it as a GIF-animation file.

View Anim

To use this feature, you must have an external viewer program that will show GIF-animations, XAnim is good for this purpose. You can find XAnim on Aminet. If you have got Workbench 3.1+, you could (maybe) use Multiview to view animations.

To configure GIFComposer for this, check the
Preferences
section of this documentation.

Read also

this
for further info about animation-viewers.

View Picture

Just like "view anim", this function uses an external viewer program. Use Multiview or similar picture viewer for this purpose.

To configure GIFComposer for this, check the
Preferences
section of this documentation.

1.10 Program settings

Program settings

•Filerequester path:

This is the drawer where GIFComposer should start to look for pictures and other stuff when a filerequester is opened.

•View picture command:

The command to execute when the button "View Picture" is pressed. A pictureviewer should be started with the selected picture as argument. The argument (picture) is substituted with a %f and it usually sits at the end. For example, if you are using Multiview:

```
sys:utilities/multiview %f
```

•View animation command:

Just like the above but this command is executed when the button "View Animation" is pressed.

•WhirlGIF location:

As GIFComposer uses

```
WhirlGIF
```

to create the anim, you

must tell GIFComposer where WhirlGIF is. If you put it in C: you

should type "c:whirlgif" here.

•Stack:

The two boxes named stack is used to set the stack usage for the View picture respective View Animation commands. In most cases you can type 4000 here. If the program used to view is crashing when started from GifComposer, try to raise this value (8000 maybe). One exception I know is XAnim which you might want to view anims with It craves a stack of 20000.

The button "Save" saves these settings and "Last saved" restores them from the last time you saved, in case you screwed something up.

1.11 Animation settings

Global Animation settings

These options affects how the entire animation should look like and behave.

The options:

•Loop, Loopcount

Set the netscape 'loop' extension, with an optional number, 'Loopcount', which will set the number of times to repeat the sequence. A zero means that it will loop in infinity. Current Netscape versions ignore the count and always repeat infinite times.

•Transparency, Value

This can either be a number 0-255 signifying the colormap index to set transparent, or a RGB color specification in the format #RRGGBB to set the first color matching the given value to be the transparent color.
For example: '#ffff00' will cause the first yellow color to be transparent (ffff00 means yellow in RGB-language).

•Delay

Set the delay time between frames a value between 0 and 65536 giving the time to sleep in 1/100s of a second.

Some example times and approximate frame rates:

- 5 = 20 frames per second
- 10 = 10 fps
- 20 = 5 fps
- 100 = 1 fps

•Disposal method

This determines how the program displaying the image should treat the image after being displayed. There are currently four possible options:

- none No disposal specified. The default.
- not Do not dispose. The next image will overlay this one.
- back Restore to background color.

```
        Fill the image's space with the previous
        background color. May cause flicker.
·prev   Restore to previous.
        Restores the previous frame's data.
```

1.12 Picture settings

-->NOT IMPLEMENTED YET<--

1.13 A little tutorial

How to compose a GIF animation

First of all you need some pictures. This program takes several GIF-pictures and merges them together so it looks like a moving picture. You should compose these pictures in a suitable program like Deluxe Paint or similar which have animation support. This kind of program is only a help with the animation-part, you could use IconEdit or anything if you want to but it's harder.

You could also use a 3d modelling program like Real3D or Imagine which also have the ability to create animations.

NOTE! Save the stuff as different pictures and not as an IFF-animation.

These pictures are then needed to be converted to GIF format or, if your paint-program supports it, save them as GIF's. (Personal Paint can save GIF-pictures but not Deluxe Paint.)

Now when you have several GIF-pictures, you may start GIFComposer.

First press the button labeled "Add". A filerequester opens and asks you to choose the pictures you have created. Select them all (hold the Shift-key and click on the names to choose more than one) and press OK. The names of the pictures will show up in the listview "Pictures in animation"

Now you could edit the order in which they will be played with the buttons "Up" and "Down" or drag them with the mouse. You may also delete them from the list or duplicate them if you want some to show many times.

Next step is to give the created animation a name. Enter it in the "Output file" field or press the button rightmost of it and select a filename. You may set some options with the menuchoice [Global Animation settings](#) or the button named [Options](#) if you want too.

Now you are finished and all that is left is to create the anim. Simply press "Make Anim" and a progress window is opened. When the window says "Processed xx files" (or similar) your animation is finished.

Press "View Anim" and enjoy. To view the animation, you need an external viewer. Read more about that in the [Program settings section](#), in the section about the button View Anim or [here](#).

1.14 Bugs, limitations and future

No special bugs are implemented by the moment (okay there might be some but I don't know anything about it).

One bug actually exists, but it's not my fault :-)

WhirlGIF 2.01 is unable to create an animation which uses the disposal methods (although it should). That means that if you want to create an animation with transparent background, the pictures should be erased after they have been displayed. To do this you should use the dispose method "background" but this is where WhirlGIF fails.

This has been solved with an updated version of WhirlGIF. It has the version number 2.02 and is available at Aminet.

You can also find it on the GIFComposer website at:
www.amigaworld.com/support/gifcomposer/ (click on 'Download')

Future enhancements
(no special priority-order)

- Maybe IFF-anim (and picture) conversion.
- Better ARExx support.
- Better Amigaguide online-help.
- Settings for an individual picture (currently a limitation in WhirlGIF).
- Built-in picture and animation viewers (maybe but not likely).
- Finish this guide.
- Documentation in HTML-format (Soon available at the support website of GIFComposer).
- I need improving my english grammar :-)

1.15 Who's responsible

The author

The creator of GIFComposer and it's manual is me, and my name is Tomas Åkesson. You can contact me if you like GIFComposer, or if you don't like it, or if you have found any bugs or just for any reason at all.

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icaros@death-star.com (forever I think)
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Sweden

Flames should go here:

>NIL:

Check my website for info about GIFComposer and my other projects.

<http://www.toptown.com/office/tomas/index.htm>

Visit the official GifComposer website for online information and updates.

<http://www.amigaworld.com/support/gifcomposer/index.html>

1.16 Thank you...

I would like to thank the following people:

- First of all thanx to Kevin Kadow for the original version and Lars Eilebrecht for the Amiga version of the program WhirlGIF which GIFComposer would be useless without.
- Dietmar Eilert, author of GoldED should have some credits because I use GoldED to write and compile GifComposer, to write this documentation and to create my website. A better and more all-round editor has not seen the light of the sun.
- Stefan Stuntz for
MUI.
 - Alain, for bugtesting and encouragement.
- Michael Lünse, for the german translation.

1.17 About MUI

This application uses

MUI - MagicUserInterface

(c) Copyright 1992-97 by Stefan Stuntz

MUI is a system to generate and maintain graphical user interfaces. With the aid of a preferences program, the user of an application has the ability to customize the outfit according to his personal taste.

MUI is distributed as shareware. To obtain a complete package containing lots of examples and more information about registration please look for a file called "muiXXusr.lha" (XX means the latest version number) on your local bulletin boards or on public domain disks.

If you want to register directly, feel free to send

DM 30.- or US\$ 20.-

to

Stefan Stuntz
Eduard-Spranger-Straße 7
80935 München
GERMANY

Support and online registration is available at

<http://www.sasg.com/>

1.18 About WhirlGIF

WhirlGIF is a PD-program made by Kevin Kadow (Amiga version by Lars Eilebrecht). It is a shell-based program used to create GIF-animations and I have decided to make a GUI for it.

It supports transparency, 4 different disposal methods, Netscape-looping and adjustable framerate. GIFComposer uses WhirlGIF 2.02 to create animations, all the options WhirlGIF uses are supported by GIFComposer.

WhirlGIF is made by Kevin Kadow kadokev@msg.net

Amiga version available from ftp://ftp.wustl.edu/pub/aminet/gfx/conv/
or the GIFComposer supportsite, www.amigaworld.com/support/gifcomposer

WhirlGIF is based on 'txtmerge' written by:
Mark Podlipec podlipec@wellfleet.com

1.19 Some useful(or less) information

Animation viewing

If you are planning to view your animations from within GIFComposer, you have to get an animation-viewer.

You can use IBrowse if you want to but it might not be so handy. The only program I know able to show GIF-animations is XAnim. It's available at Aminet in the directory gfx/show/.

There are several versions of XAnim (atleast two). I am using the one that comes in an archive called XAnim8.lha. It should have the version number 2.69.7.8.

I havent tested any other.

One problem with XAnim is that it needs a stack that is bigger than (or same as) 20000 bytes. All you have to do is open GifComposers "Program settings" window and enter 20000 in the stack gadget sitting after the "View animation" gadget.

I know that Multiview cannot show GIF-animations although it can show IFF-anims (strange), that is with the standard animation.datatype (WB 3.1+) and ZGIF-datatype, but someone might know better than me in this case (I might have missed some new GIF or animation datatypes). Contact me in that case or if you know anything about other programs able to show GIF-anims.

1.20 History

Version 0.10.5, released october 1997

- Severe bug that created software-failures (80000004 or ..3) when error-requesters were opened is now fixed.
- Added filerequester-popup-buttons (complicated word huh!) in the Program-settings window so you don't have to enter the paths yourself.
- The arexx-command 'setactive' works okay.
- The "Settings" gadget is disabled so you wont press it and get dissapointed when nothing happens.
- All remaining strings added to swedish catalog-file.
- German catalog added.
- An installscript is avaiiabile now.

Version 0.9.4, released august 1997

- I fixed the "long paths in list" problem.
Just imagine if you have some pics which lies in the drawer:
Work:Programs/Grafix/Real3d/projects/pictures/vehicules/cars/chevys/camaro_67' ↔
s_with_big_tires/
You might see the names of the pictures if you enlarge the window and if you're very lucky, but I (personally) don't like it. (Who would?)
I fixed that using two columns with the filename of the picture in one column and the entire path in the other. The other column is not visible for the user.
I'm planning on doing the same for the picture-specific preferences but this'll have to wait because of limitations in WhirlGIF.
 - I got a report that it wasn't possible to make animations in the Ram disk (thanks Alain!). This was because I forgot that a filename may include spaces and never took any notice about it. (The Ram disk has spaces in it's name.)
Actually I even tested on my own Ram disk and it went OK. That was because I had renamed my Ram disk a time ago to avoid problems like this, and I never use spaces in filenames so I had never noticed it myself.
This is fixed! You can now use as many spaces you want in any filenames.
 - Ability to change stack of animation/picture-viewing commands. That means that you could put the xanim-script, that I bundled with previous versions, in the trashcan. It's not neccessary anymore.
 - Changed version numbers (0.9.X instead of 0.09) and compilation-date string according to the Amiga styleguide.
 - GifComposer is now localized! I am creating a swedish translation myself and I've got a german translator as well, so soon you'll be able to understand what buttons to push and stuff (if you're swedish or german-speaking).
 - Drag'n drop listview. Now you may click on a picture in the list and drag it to the desired position instead of pressing the up and down-buttons.
 - ARexx support. If you want to interface GifComposer with DPaint5, ImageFX or any other programs with arexxports (to convert grafix or something) it will soon be possible. I have implemented some arexx-commands but i will add more, and maybe some useable ones too. :-) I planned on writing some rx-scripts myself but I haven't got any good grafix-programs so I think I'll let other people do that. Interested? Write!
-

Version 0.08, never released.

Version 0.07, released august 1997:

- Help-bubbles is now available for all gadgets.
- A settings-menu with some new items, such as:
- A window to edit the program-settings from within the program instead of messing with the Tooltypes.
- A new logo (nicer or uglier, who knows? I'm no artist :-). Anyway, the old logo was stolen from the Newicons-package and I don't wanna be a thief, so I draw (image-processed) one myself. (Artists are welcome with logo-suggestions.)
- Cleaned-up and better organized windows and gadgets.
- The program has grown about 5 kilobytes. (It's about time to start optimizing 'cause this is not a very complicated program so it don't have to be >27000 bytes.)
- Better icons (I hope).
- Bugfixes in the documentation(!)
 - In the 0.06-documentation I wrote in the "Useful info about animation viewers" part of this documentation that you should type "execute PROGDIR:xxanim %f" to show an animation. That doesn't work! The directory PROGDIR: may only be used inside a program so I have fixed that.
 - I also wrote that you could configure GifComposer through a window called "Program settings". That window wasn't added until version 0.07 so it may have caused some frustration. Sorry.

1.21 myindex

A little tutorial

About MUI

About the author

About WhirlGIF

Bugs, limitations and future

Disclaimer

History

Installation

Introduction

Mainpage

Some information about animation viewers

Usage of program

Usage

Gadgets in main window

Settings

Program settings

Animation settings

Picture settings
