

art two

XPress Online - By Chris Patmore

Review: Badia Duplica XT

Last issue I mentioned a free XTension from Badia Software called FullMeasure XT (which is in the process of being upgraded). Also available from their site is their first commercial Xtension, Duplica XT. Basically it extends the copy and paste capabilities of XPress to include character and paragraph styles and also to clone and duplicate boxes, lines etc. The really clever part is that each item is kept in its own 'pasteboard' so that a copied character style won't be deleted when a line style is copied or a block of text is copied.

his copying of attributes can really speed up the way you work, especially when used in conjunction with, rather than replacing, style sheets. It is such a simple concept, yet beautifully and transparently executed. Its creator, Dario Badia, has paid a great deal of attention to detail in producing an XTension that is stable and takes advantage of the facilities of XPress 4 and OS8.5. It is one of the first XTensions to utilise contextual menus, thus eliminating the need for yet another floating palette.

The uses and possibilities are endless and are clearly and concisely explained in the accompanying (printed) manual, along with a host of tips and examples. It is one of those tools that once you start using it you'll wonder how you ever got along without it.

X Rating: XXXXX

Pros: Contextual menus, excellent manual, well conceived and designed

Cons: None

Available from <http://www.badiasoftware.com> for \$39.99. Demo version available.

Updater

The new G3 professional machines are about to hit the Mac market in a big way, with every designer wanting to have one on his desk. Following the developments started with the iMac these machines have no floppy drive and use USB ports. This means that Quark is going to have to review the way it sells its software. XPress is traditionally installed using two floppies - one with the installer and one for user registration. It is possible to create a disk image of the installer disk without any problem but, in my experience, it will not recognise a disk image of the user registration disk that is pre-mounted as this needs to be mounted during the installation process. If the program has already been installed and registered once and a disk image is made then there is no need for the registration disk for further installations. Apple, in its wisdom, has maintained an ADB port which means those accursed dongles, that Quark ships with Passport and some other versions of XPress, will still function.

With the pending release of Adobe's so called "Quark killer" it seems like the ideal moment for the wigs at Quark to come up with a new strategy to overcome the problems of piracy and installation. I have one suggestion that will not only overcome the problem of piracy but also ensure that XPress stays on the desktops of Macintoshes around the world. Half the price!

I read some years ago that XPress has 3 million users worldwide, but only one million registered. If XPress was sold for half its current price it would sell more than twice as many copies, thus eliminating a majority of the piracy, and users would be less tempted to abandon it in favour of Adobe's new offering. Users would also not feel so bad about Quark's infamous support (or lack of) if they weren't paying a premium price for the software. With the problem of piracy reduced they could put the installer on the CD and have registration online, like almost everybody else, and also be completely compatible with the new hardware. To help keep the price down they could give more support to XTensions developers to add the specialist features, instead of incorporating them into the program and taking them away from the developers. For years we used XPress 3 with a host of fantastic XTensions that was far more stable than the current release. I know of many studios that still prefer to use that combination.

So what about it Quark? What have you got to lose? If you don't do something positive it may be all your customers!

Freebie

This month I have only come across one new free XTension, but it is a good one. We all get a bit annoyed with the quality of the screen previews of bitmap images (TIFF and EPS) in XPress. One work around is to save the image file as an EPS with JPEG preview (but not JPEG encoding). But if you prefer to use TIFFs then you have to suffer, especially when blowing up the magnification. Suffer no more. Go to Quark's site <http://www.quark.com> and download Enhance Preview XT-SE. (EPXT). This XTension has some of the more advanced features disabled but does what it promises. It will not work however, in either SE or full version, with vector files and some other formats such as PICT. I have also found that it grays out the 'Preferences' menu and sometimes crashed when redrawing images over a network, even if "Enhance Preview" was not turned on. This was on machines running OS 8.5 and I haven't tried it with other machines, so it may be just a problem with 8.5. Give it a try though, it's not going to cost you anything.

It can also be downloaded by ftp from <ftp://ftp.quark.com/xpress/EPXT/Mac>

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