oLive 4.0

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Pros: None of the crashes of version 3.1.1
Cons: Some users are nervous of Adobe's intentions
Category: Web design.
Developer: Adobe Systems, Inc. (by acquisition of GoLive Systems, Inc.)
<http://www.adobe.com>

oLive version 4.0, the successor to GoLive CyberStudio 3.1.1, has finally been released this week and thousands of Web developers can breathe a sigh of relief because their prayers have been answered and they have a bug-free (relatively, as no software is completely bugless), non-crashing and new feature-loaded version to use each day now. You can stop tearing out your hair, people let it grow again.

Even though the former GoLive CyberStudio 3.1.1 (henceforth to be known as GLCS) was the very best of its class, leaps and bounds ahead of DreamWeavers 1.2 and 2, it suffered badly from independent-developeritis, and failed to penetrate many of its potential markets. Until I started showing it off in my local area, the Web design community here seemed to consist only of FrontPage jockeys who reckoned little Billy Gates the next best thing to God. Ignorance is bliss, I guess, and you cannot underestimate Windows victims too much, self-haters all.

art of the reason for this surprising lack of market share was that GLCS was a Mac-only

product, made by a motley crew of dedicated Mac fanatics from the print publishing business in Germany and America, and that is death to a product no matter how superlative, when it tries to enter a marketplace dominated by pro-Windows PC bigots like this one here. That excuse will no longer be valid come 2nd quarter of this year, when the Windows version ships.

THE ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE UPGRADE
No question, it is a gotta-get. It should really have been named version 3.5, as GoLive themselves planned to do during the long months of the last year when they were revising it, and users were despairing of the constant crashes of a normal working day. It made me feel like I was using a Windows computer again, dreading each day in front of the computer, were it not for the fact that the sheer quality (otherwise) of GLCS 3.1.1 made creating ambitious DHTML, or even plain vanilla HTML 3.2, Web pages such a breeze.

Once you get over the learning curve that is. But any deep program that does as much has an equally steep curve, and with GoLive 4.0 (GL4) being ported to Windows then we can expect more in the way of how-to books and tutorials. And DreamWeaver, the only close competition so far, has a learning curve of a different type. It demands far more knowledge of hard core HTML, DHTML and JavaScript coding than GL4 or GLCS 3.1.1 ever did. Which of course is what you would expect of software in its 4th generation as opposed to its 2nd.

THE NEW STUFF
This is a first look review rather than an in-depth analysis so I will simply list the new version's most outstanding features. Bear in mind that I have not yet had the time to dig deep into the product yet. And being a fanatic for decent printed manuals, especially for a program as vast as this one, I have not delved into the PDF manual as it is poorly formatted for onscreen reading, I do not have a second computer just to read it on, and I do not much like on screen manuals anyway, despite my fondness for trees.

Here are some of the most outstanding improvements:
• Stability.
• A components function that actually works now.
• A built-in FTP up and download function that really works.
• QuickTime movie editor.
• Support for XML.
• Actions Plus 1.0: twelve of the most common customer requested JavaScript actions.
• JavaScript library that lets you save button images and other scripted actions as Dynamic Components.
• New JavaScript triggers and variable actions that let you make user-customisable pages.
• Support for custom code and Active Server Pages.
• Other editors, apparently. As I do not seem to have the full package I cannot comment on these and other additions that are on the CD-ROM.   More on these when the boxed version appears. Cross my fingers on that happening fast however.
• Keyboard shortcuts, thank God! For instance, Cmd-L will turn selected

text into a link, Cmd -, will select the URL field in the Inspector, and
Cmd-; will again select the "selected" text in the document.
• The ability to edit URLs in Flash files within GoLive itself.

THE BAD NEWS, SORTA
With the corporate acquisition of a product, indeed of a whole company, their customers
get the good with the bad. The good is that the arrival of GoLive at Adobe lends the
product all the weight and credibility and resources of a major industry player.

As does its porting over to the dark side of the force in computing, evil, nasty, third-rate
old Windows. Those fallen souls in the business world whom we work for now will be
able to own their own copies of GoLive and screw up the carefully crafted code you
create for them. They will be able to make their own content additions without messing
up too badly, in the woeful way of that current standard mediocrity in HTML editors from
Microsoft, FrontPage 98. You won't be called in quite so often to sort it all out and
rebuild it for them, which should do wonders for your stress levels. It may cut your
income down a bit though.

On another front, there will be more reference books on GoLive to add to the only one in
existence right now from PeachPit Press's Visual QuickStart Guide on version 3.1.1.
Training will become available to combat the steep learning curve.

Web authors working in a mixed platform will have less hassles when they are
cooperating on a project with programmers who may work on the Windows platform.
They can have their own copy of GoLive and wreak whatever changes to a file they
need to in that, then send it back to you for revision in your Mac version.

Another benefit is that Adobe is currently revising its whole design and publishing
product strategy, fusing most of its products together in a collection of synergistic
programs sharing many common interface elements, with program bundle purchase
price discounting and savings in learning time to match. GoLive, InDesign (the reputed
Adobe Quark-killer), Photoshop, Illustrator, ImageReady, ImageStyler, Acrobat: they will
coexist better than ever before in a manner that reflects real world work flow conditions
and demands on you from clients.

SELLING OUT TO THE MAN
However, the big downside right now is Adobe's failure to come to terms with the
realities of the Internet on a corporate planning and policy level, as subscribers to the
GoLive mailing list (email <GoLiveTalk-on@col.acc-inc.com> to subscribe) are learning
to their collective dismay.

Adobe does not have a mechanism in place that allows users everywhere to pay their
money and download the latest version over the Web, as GoLive did so well when they
were an independent developer. Adobe themselves state that it is a question of
geographical market demarcations that disallows this. Macromedia on the other hand
do direct ESD (Electronic Software Distribution) sales over the 'net quite successfully.

ILL WE BE FORGOTTEN?
Global internal corporate communications has long been an Adobe weak point, such that while the Web product division staff at Adobe US know of the existence of GoLive, the majority of Adobe staff elsewhere haven't a clue that it exists at all, what it is actually, or most importantly to us when it is going to appear in their particular domains. It might be months away for the majority of us.

US and Canada residents on the other hand get the best of all worlds (as always), with a slew of upgrade and purchase options from this week onwards. They can download the product over the Web after making a quick-ish credit card transaction, or order various boxed bundles and competitive upgrades for paltry sums.

Will we be so lucky? I doubt it, given past performance and current excuses. There is no doubt that Adobe now has some very strong products and a terrific strategy for the future. But they must pay attention to their customers in a way they have never done before, they must learn something from GoLive Systems themselves in that regard as their customer support was more than outstanding, and Adobe must most of all come to grips with the realities of a world where instant demand and instant gratification are daily bywords.

In fact, dire necessities of survival.

New to version 4.0 is the Actions plus 1.0 pack, and what a boon its contents are to the thousands of Web developers who are not inclined to hand-coding JavaScript. If the acquisition of GoLive by Adobe and the coming birth of a Windows version is, as Adobe staff claim, about to bring the added benefits of more extras, more plug-ins, more books and more training and the Actions Pack is a small sample of these benefits, then roll on Adobe.

Adobe's product release notes state that Actions Plus 1.0 comprises "twelve of the most commonly requested JavaScript Actions [that] have been created by developers from around the world". Close to the mark. Actions Plus adds a set of extremely useful prewritten JavaScripts to an already expanded set of native JavaScript actions. True, one could have simply cut-and-pasted similar scripts from one of the many excellent Web site collections, but GoLive's Actions palette interface makes the application of these new scripts a virtual no-brainer.
They include:

.   Confirm Link - confirms via a confirm window whether the viewer
wishes to go to a specific link.
2.   Daily Image URL - swaps base image for selected image for each day of
the week, e.g. autoselect an image, background tile or text GIF based on
the day of the week a visitor arrives at your site.
3.   Daily Redirect - send a visitor to a specific page based on the day
of the week.
4.   Delete Cookie - deletes an existing cookie.
5.   Force Frame - forces a page to always load in a frameset, great if
visitors come direct to a page that should be part of a frameset via a
search engine.
6.   Kill Frame - great insurance against another Web site framing your
page within one of theirs.
7.   Password - security for a page or section within your site.
8.   Slide Show - generates a slide show controllable by the viewer from a
folder full of images.
9.   Slide Show Auto - automatic version of the above, such that you set
the timings and whether it loops or not.
10. Slide Show Auto Stop - used in conjunction with Slide Show Auto,
allows you to stop the show with a click.
11. Target 2 Frames - click on a link in one frame and the contents of
two other change at the same time.
12. Target Remote - use when you make a remote window to control the
contents of the main window.
13. Time Redirect - depending on whether the time is before after after
your nominated hour, this takes your visitor to a specific page based on
the time at their location.
14. Visitor Cookie - sets a cookie on first visit, then redirects on
subsequent visits.

In all a very useful set of JavaScripts and one that will be much appreciated by many
harried Web developers the world over. Perhaps we should all get out our pen and
paper and our own wish lists of JavaScripts we would like to see in GoLive version 4.5.
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