

FOR WINDOWS & MACINTOSH

SHOCKWAVE!

*Breathe new Life
into your
web pages*



*Thrills!
Chills!*
CD-ROM!

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Companion

FREE
Online
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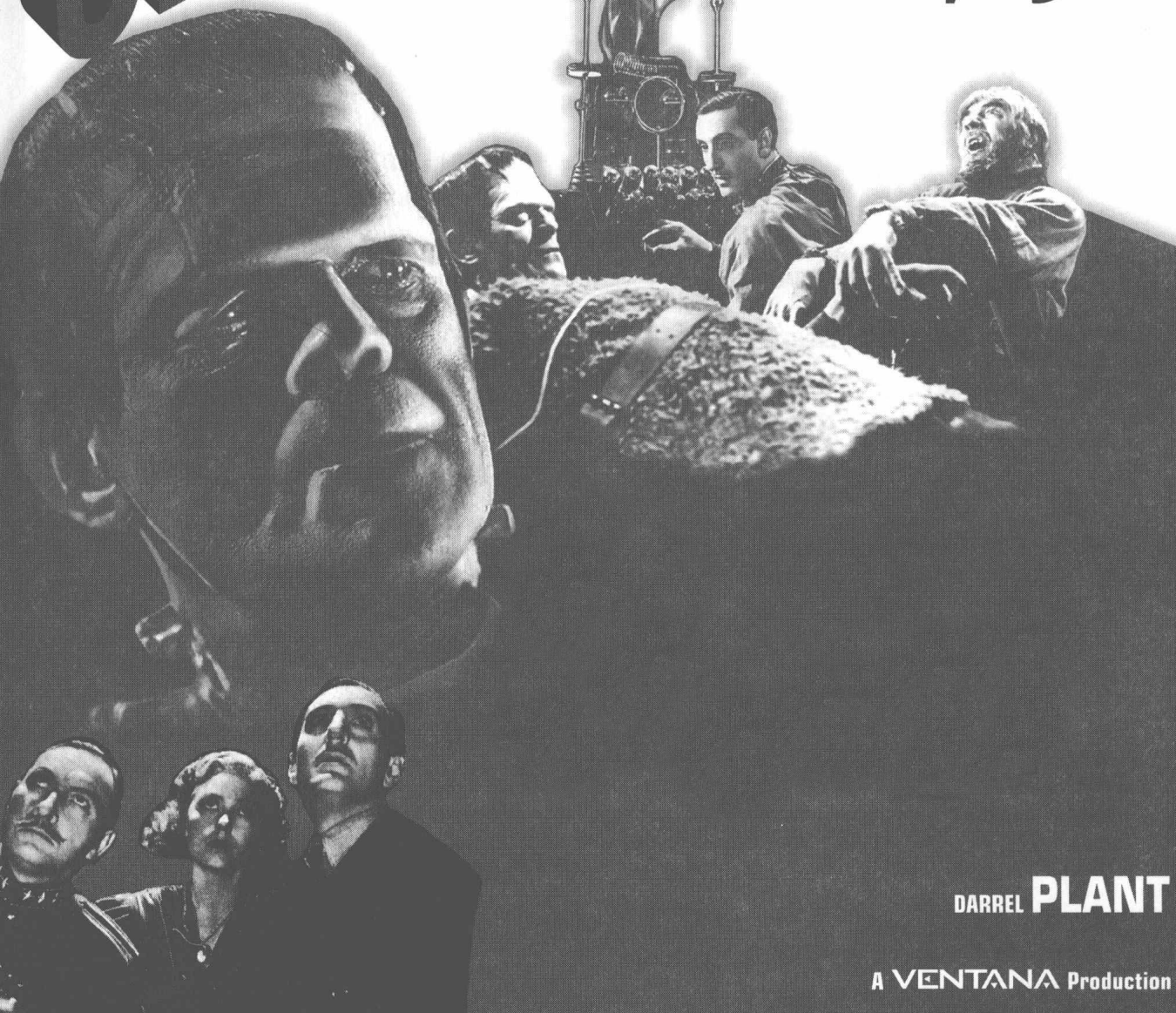
DARREL **PLANT**

A VENTANA Production

FOR WINDOWS & MACINTOSH

SHOCKWAVE

*breathe new life
into your
web pages*



DARREL **PLANT**

A VENTANA Production

Shockwave!: breathe new life into your Web pages

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, Barbara, and my parents,
JoAnn and David.

About the Author

Darrel Plant is a multimedia producer for Moshofsky/Plant Creative Services in Portland, Oregon, where he has specialized in the production of compact disk-based multimedia presentations and World Wide Web site design. Plant teaches Macromedia Director for the Portland (Oregon) State University Multimedia Professional Certificate Program. He published and edited the quarterly *Plant's Review of Books* and has written for *Step-by-Step Graphics* and *WIRED* magazines. Plant currently edits the newsletter of the Oregon chapter of the International Interactive Communications Society and is Vice President of the chapter for the year 1996.

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Introduction

S*hockwave!* is a hands-on tutorial approach to one of the more interesting things to come down the information turnpike: Macromedia's Shockwave for Director. Shockwave for Director lets users—over 200,000 of them—of Macromedia's premiere multimedia authoring tool create truly interactive presentations, with animation and sound, for the World Wide Web.

This book focuses on how to optimize graphics and sound for your Shockwave movies, and emphasizes the new Shockwave Lingo commands and functions through the use of exercises specifically created to highlight a particular ability of this new technology.

Shockwave allows you to create complex and attractive multimedia presentations for the Internet using a tool far simpler to learn and/or use than other technologies with the same capabilities (can you say "Java"?). While somewhat limited in scope in its first releases, Shockwave has already been incorporated by many companies and organizations into their World Wide Web sites.



Because Macromedia allows free downloading of the Shockwave viewer (a plug-in for Web browsers) and Afterburner (the tool that creates Shockwave movies from Director files), it's possible for anyone with a browser capable of supporting the plug-in to view Shockwave movies. And anyone with Director 4.04 on Windows or Mac OS platforms can create Shockwave movies.

It was early in 1995, just after we at Moshofsky / Plant set up our own World Wide Web server, that I started to worry about the direction my own skills were taking. I'd gotten into multimedia because of the promise it showed for integrating graphics and sound with the power of the computer to control the entire experience.

As I spent more and more time working in HTML, coding pages, converting graphics to GIFs, optimizing our Web server, and collecting tools that would make the tedious tasks easier, I was spending less and less time using Director. "The Web is the future," everyone was saying. "Learn HTML and CGI or die." Indeed, I spent more of the year working on Web sites than I did on more "conventional" multimedia.

Then in the middle of the year, Macromedia began making announcements about how they were meeting the challenge of online communications, and the word "Shockwave" began to be bandied about. A light began to glimmer at the end of the tunnel.

The Shockwave seminars at the Macromedia Users Conference in October were jammed, almost as if the plan was to create a pressure cooker atmosphere. Many of the people I talked to said a deciding factor in their decision to attend the 1995 conference was to get their first look at Shockwave.

On December 4, 1995, the floodgates opened, with the release of the public beta test of the Shockwave plug-in (for Windows—the Mac OS plug wouldn't be ready for two more months) and Afterburner tool (for both platforms). Shockwave sites began to multiply.

For me, a happy convergence was occurring. The Internet and the World Wide Web, which had threatened to drag me away from the type of responsive, synchronized work that had attracted me to multimedia in the first place, was becoming a place where—with a little planning and good craftsmanship—I could create work that appealed to those original sensibilities.

1996 looks good.

Who Needs This Book?

Shockwave! is intended for anyone interested in creating interactive multimedia for the World Wide Web using Macromedia Director and Shockwave for Director.

The exercises in this book are constructed so that a beginning Director user should be able to follow the instructions. But because our central focus has been on demonstrating the techniques of preparing graphics and sound for Internet delivery and the use of Shockwave Lingo commands, experienced Director users who have been more focused on other areas apart from the Web will be able to get something out of them as well.

What's Inside?

Each of the eight chapters of this book deals with a specific area of knowledge necessary for using Shockwave for Director.

Chapter 1, "How the Web Works," provides some background on the Internet and the World Wide Web, focusing on the URL addressing schemes used in HTML and Shockwave.

Chapter 2, "Into the Shockwave," focuses on how Shockwave fits into the scheme of things on the Web, how it works, and its capabilities.

Chapter 3, "Eine Kleine Shockwave," takes you through the procedure to create your first Shockwave movie using the Afterburner. Then it moves on to showing how interactivity using Shockwave differs from the standard Web page, and guides you through the process of creating a set of pages and movies using Shockwave Lingo.

Chapter 4, "Preparing Graphics for Shockwave," details how to squeeze the most from your bitmap and object graphics for use in Shockwave movies, as well as how to convert an existing Web design into something Shockwave.

Chapter 5, "Asynchronous Text," introduces another series of Shockwave Lingo commands and functions that allow you to read text files from Web servers and use them to control and modify your Shockwave movies.



Chapter 6, “Other Asynchronous Operations,” completes the introduction of Shockwave Lingo commands and functions, with exercises that focus on how to manage multiple Shockwave Lingo operations.

Chapter 7, “The Sounds of Shockwave,” shows how to prepare sounds for Shockwave so that they don’t hog Internet bandwidth, and details how to use several short, repeatable sound loops to vary the user experience.

Chapter 8, “Shockwave Tricks,” brings many of the previously discussed techniques together to do things like keeping the screen from being blank while your movies are loading, testing the speed of your connection with the user, using Shockwave movies as button bars, and using tiled objects in graphics.

Finally, visit the Gallery, which highlights 14 movies created by some very talented Shockwave artists and programmers.

In addition to the eight chapters and gallery that comprise the book proper, you’ll find six appendices: Appendix A, “About the Online Companion”; Appendix B, “About the Companion CD-ROM”; Appendix C, “Shockwave Lingo,” provides a useful reference for all of the Shockwave Lingo terms; Appendix D, “What You Can’t Do With Shockwave,” lists the features of Director that are disabled or unavailable in Shockwave; Appendix E, “File Size Estimates,” is a chart of approximate final file sizes for Director movies and Shockwave movies made from them; and Appendix F, “Configuring Your Web Server for Shockwave,” concerns the MIME type information needed for your World Wide Web server to properly serve Shockwave files.

Hardware & Software Requirements

To follow the exercises in this book, you will need a computer running the Windows 3.1, Windows 95, or Mac OS operating system. Software needs include Macromedia Director and Afterburner and a plug-in-capable Web browser with the Shockwave for Director plug-in installed. Some exercises in Chapter 4 require an image-editing program such as Adobe Photoshop, and an exercise in Chapter 7 details the use of Macromedia SoundEdit 16.

Many of the Shockwave Lingo commands in Chapters 5 and later require that the files you create be served through a World Wide Web server, so Internet access to a server configured for serving Shockwave movies is necessary for those exercises.

Keep On Shockin'

The world of Shockwave is new and evolving. This book will give you your first set of Shockwave lungs and get you onto dry land, but it's up to you to grow legs and run with it. Shockwave for Director is truly the most accessible tool available for bringing to the Web the type of interactive multimedia that people have come to expect from computer presentations.

At Moshofsky / Plant we are always interested in comments and examples of what's being done in the world of multimedia. Feel free to send any such contributions you may have to us at shockwave@moshplant.com.



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