

Drawing and Painting with ImageReady

If you followed the Fireworks tutorial, you should now have a simple GIF animation. Today I'll guide you through the creation of a similar animation in ImageReady. For the purposes of comparison, I'll try to keep the animations as similar as possible, but there will be a few deviations that reflect the different capabilities of each application.

To start, create a new document (File:New). Make it 300 pixels wide by 200 pixels high with a transparent background.

To choose a foreground color, select a yellow-orange from the small rainbow of colors at the bottom of the Color tool palette. You'll notice that there are three color swatches. The two overlapping colors indicate the current foreground and background colors. The third swatch is flanked by a small cube, which informs you if a selected color isn't browser-safe. When this happens, click on the adjoining swatch to get the closest browser-safe match. If you don't like that match, but still want to pick a browser-safe color, click and drag around the cube swatch to reveal other close matches. Release the mouse button when you find the foreground color you want.

Like Fireworks, there are several ways to select a color in ImageReady. You can double-click on either the foreground or background color swatch to open a color picker window. By default you should see a color picker unique to ImageReady, which uses the Web-color cube. To access the color pickers that you used in Fireworks, select File Preferences:General.

First, enlarge the document window to give yourself ample working space. If you want to specify a color by its Hexadecimal value, make sure that you select Web Color Sliders from the Color palette's preferences (via the triangle pulldown in the upper-right corner). For now, choose FF for red, CC for green, and 33 for blue. Click on the marquee tool until the ellipse icon pops up. Using the ellipse tool, hold down the shift key and click and drag to select a circle about one inch in diameter.

In Fireworks, you select colors that apply to objects; in ImageReady, you select colors that apply to tools. Fill the selection with Edit:Fill. Choose Foreground Color under Contents and click OK. Alternatively, Option-Delete on Macintosh or Alt-Delete on Windows will fill any selection with the current foreground color. Double-click on the current layer in the layers palette to rename it Small Circle. De-select the circle by clicking outside the selection or by choosing Select:None. Click on the move tool (left) and reposition the circle near the upper-right corner of the document window.

When you work with ImageReady, it's important to create separate layers for separate elements. If you don't, anything you add to a layer will merge with whatever it overlaps. So choose Duplicate Layer from the Layers tool palette and rename the new layer Large Circle.

Choose Edit:Free Transform, and a selection with eight handles appears. These handles allow you to resize and distort the selection. If you need to rotate the selection, just click and drag between the handles. Move the selection by dragging anywhere inside the selected area. While holding down the shift key, drag a corner handle to make the circle nearly twice as large as the document area. After it's large enough, hit the Enter key. If you need to cancel the Free Transform mode, hit the Escape key. Drag that circle so that only part of it is visible in the bottom-left corner of the document window.

Since ImageReady is primarily a pixel-based tool, it doesn't enlarge simple elements as smoothly as Fireworks does. You'll notice that the outline of the larger circle is not as smooth as that of the smaller one, but don't worry about that right now. To change the color of the smaller circle, select the Small Circle layer, and choose the menu item Select:Load Selection:Small Circle Transparency. Fill the selection with the color FF,33,00.

Next, you'll add the text. Select the text tool, and two things happen: A new text layer is created and a text-dialog box pops open. Select your favorite font and set it to a size of 40 points. Type "A happy monkey." An ImageReady text is treated differently than regular bitmap layers: You can apply kerning and other refinements to it, even specify different modes of anti-aliasing, and it's editable at all times. However, you can only assign one font to a text block and only one text block to a layer. Also, if you want to apply filters to the text block, you may have to convert it to a bitmap first.

In the Layers tool palette, drag the text layer you just created to the top position so that it appears in front of the other layers. In the document window, center the text and place it near the bottom.

ImageReady's Layer Effects aren't as graceful as Fireworks' Live Effects. To see what I mean, click on the Action tool palette and select F/X - Drop Shadow. With the text layer active, click on the play

button. The color and position of this drop-shadow effect are fixed, and trying to eliminate the effect later can be a royal pain (the drop-shadow effect in Fireworks is a lot more versatile). But you can edit the text or its color at any time. All in all, the Layer Effect is hardly the showcase feature of ImageReady.

Save the file (File:Save Original As), and you'll notice that ImageReady adds a

.psd extension to the file name. These files are completely editable in Photoshop, although you can only edit text if you have Photoshop 5.

Spend a few minutes messing around with the different tools in the Toolbox. Just remember to create a new layer for each element so that you can easily move or undo anything that you add.

And now let's do some pixel pushing.

Tutorial Source