REVIEWS

At Long Last, Layout RightBrain's PasteUp is the first true page-layout package for the NeXT

by Lee Sherman

For desktop publishers who have faced a choice between the easy-to-use pasteboard approach of PageMaker and the precise typographical control of QuarkXPress, RightBrain Software offers the best of both worlds with its new Paste-Up page-layout program. Then it goes both Mac programs one better by applying the NeXT way of doing things every chance it can.

As the first true page-layout program for the NeXT, PasteUp fills a major software gap. (Other layout programs, from Pages Corporation and Archetype Corporation, are on the horizon.) For many designers, its accurate kerning, tracking, word-spacing control, and support for the Pantone Matching System may eliminate their last remaining objection to going with the NeXT. Office workers will revel in its reliance on simple drag-and-drop techniques. It's so easy to use they may not even realize they're doing DTP.

Even this prerelease version of PasteUp is fast. The program launches in a remarkable one-half second, making it suitable for on-the-fly projects like fax cover sheets, maps, and even business letters. Screen redraw, typically a bottleneck in publishing programs on other platforms, is virtually instantaneous thanks to Display Post-Script's speedy rendering.

All elements in PasteUp can be directly edited on the page; the program is a paragon of direct manipulation. Graphics, text, colors, attributes, and even styles are all applied by dragging-and-dropping.

This object orientation gives PasteUp a realistic feel that is missing elsewhere: You see the entire object as you drag it, which you don't when working with Quark-XPress. Objects become partially transparent as they are dragged, making it easier to position them on the page. Reach-through graphics let you grab any object that is at least partially visible on-screen, even if it's on another layer.

None of these touches changes the nature of page layout Ð you still slap elements down on a page and tweak them until they look right. By starting from scratch, however, PasteUp's designers had the luxury of taking a fresh look at the process. PasteUp can reproduce any page done in Quark or PageMaker, but it does so differently.

Some of the improvements are subtle, such as automatically applying smart quotes, and em and en dashes, as you type. You can also customize the tool palette. Other changes are more radical. Rather than rely on the concept of master pages to automate document creation, PasteUp uses Master Elements. Master Elements can be edited in place locally, no matter where in the document you happen to be, and the changes will be reflect-ed throughout the entire document.

This emphasis on ease of navigation is one of the best things about PasteUp, since so much of page layout involves zooming, scrolling, and dragging. The Page Navigator panel is similar to Quark's Document Layout palette, providing thumbnail views of your pages within a scrollable, resizable window. From here you can add and delete pages, collapse and expand ranges, and jump immediately to any spot in your publication. You can maintain multiple views of the same document at a variety of magnification levels ranging from 25 to 1600 percent.

PasteUp's unique Dimensions panel will appeal to two different types of users: Those who thrive on the numerical precision achieved by typing values into a dialog box can work the way they're used

to, while more hands-on types can take a freeform approach, watching the readout until the desired scale or rotation is achieved.

RightBrain knew that PasteUp would be compared to Quark, so it made sure to meet the typographic requirements of the most obsessive graphic designer. Text can be ro-tated to any degree and edited in any rotation. Adjustments down to 1/1000 of an em are possible.

Anticipation is so high for PasteUp that its creators are in danger of falling off a cliff. For a 1.0, the program is amazingly full-featured and elegant in its implementation. It is not yet fully mature, though. Missing from the application are image-manipulation controls, a scripting language, and a system for third-party extensions. PasteUp also completely lacks any long-document features, such as automatic-index and table-of-contents generation, a table editor, or revision tracking. For that, you'll have to turn to the old standby, FrameMaker.

Additionally, the prerelease we used for this review failed to take advantage of any of the features of NeXTSTEP 3.0.

NeXT users have waited far too long for a page-layout program that worked the way they expect it to. With PasteUp, you no longer have to make the choice between usability and power.

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