



**GOT A COMMENT**

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WE CAN PRINT?**

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C/O THE PUBLISHER  
GRAPHIC EXCHANGE  
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**NICK SHINN HITS THE MARK**

Re: Good Reading—Against  
Obscure Typography by Nick  
Shinn (GX Jan/Feb 2002)

Every two months GRAPHIC  
EXCHANGE hits my office and  
usually hits the growing stack  
of periodicals I less than peri-  
odically read.

I have worked in advertis-  
ing long enough to have met  
(and in some cases worked  
with) people who were mas-  
ters. Gary Prouk. James Patter-  
son. Mary Wells. Charlie  
Moss. And I had the honour to  
meet and have an interesting  
chat with Krone.

My background is creative  
(writer, although after Queen's  
I got a degree from Ryerson in  
Photographic Arts so I'm not  
visually illiterate). Today I own  
a small company in Toronto.

I can't tell you how many  
times I have argued, bullied,  
etc etc art directors and design-  
ers based on hard-to-read type.  
Eight point reversed out type  
is hard to read. It's not a matter  
of taste, it's a matter of human  
physiology, and unless I missed  
something in the New Eng-  
land Journal of Medicine, this  
physiology has not changed  
recently.

Thank you for writing that  
article. It is now required read-  
ing for freelance art directors  
and designers who want me to  
pay them money for their bril-  
liant work. Because aside from  
'brilliance', I also insist on skill.

**WILLIAM LOWER (BILL), PRESIDENT  
LOWER CANADA, INC.  
TORONTO ON**

**DROP SHADOW TIP**

I enjoyed your article on ob-  
scure type and the craft of ty-  
pography in the latest GRAPHIC  
EXCHANGE, but in your sidebar

on Legibility (top of page 24)  
your suggestions for creating a  
drop shadow are a bit out of  
date.

The main problem with  
your methods is, in both the  
*QuarkXPress* and *Illustrator*  
examples, you suggest creating  
a copy of the type and placing  
it behind, which introduces  
the problem of multiple blocks  
of type. Whatever editing you  
do to the white type, also needs  
to be done to the black type  
serving as your drop shadow.  
That makes for twice as much  
work and twice as many errors.

Here's a better way in  
*Adobe Illustrator 10*:  
1. Select the block of type; 2. In  
the Appearance palette fly-out  
menu choose Add New Fill;  
3. Drag the newly created Fill  
below Characters in the Ap-  
pearance palette; 4. Select Fill  
again and select Effect> Dis-  
tort and Transform> Trans-  
form; 5. Enter the horizontal  
and vertical offset for the "drop  
shadow".

This method keeps the type  
and drop shadow together as  
one object in a "live" state that  
can easily be edited and spell  
checked.

A similar live effect can be  
achieved in *InDesign 2.0* with  
soft drop shadows.

**COLIN SMITH, TECHNICAL RESOURCE MGR  
ADOBE SYSTEMS INC.  
TORONTO, ON**

[Thanks for the tip, Colin. In fair-  
ness to Nick, his drop shadow  
description was only out of date  
by a month or two, since *Illus-  
trator 10* and *InDesign 2* have  
just been released recently. But  
for the large number of design-  
ers who are still working with  
older versions, this one tip alone  
might be enough to prompt  
them to upgrade.]

**MISSING TRACES**

Let me say that I always enjoy  
reading your publication. The  
articles are always timely and  
for the most part, informative  
and very well-written.

I have just finished reading  
your Jan/Feb 2002 issue and I  
have to comment on the arti-  
cle written about tracing (Just  
an outline?). This is an aspect  
of digital graphics that I work  
with on an almost daily basis as  
a small prepress service bureau  
working mostly with the screen  
printing industry. We do file  
conversions, camera ready art-  
work and film output, and of-  
ten run into bitmap images  
that have to be converted to  
vector art.

I found this article very bi-  
ased towards *Illustrator*. The  
writers do indicate that they  
mostly use *Illustrator*, but it  
seems to be to the exclusion of  
other graphics software, the ob-  
vious one being Corel. While  
Corel got an 'honourable men-  
tion' at the end of the article, it  
was only for their AutoTrace  
module which was deemed to  
be "pretty decent". No men-  
tion was made at all of *Corel-  
Trace*, which can go up against

*Adobe Streamline* and comes  
bundled with *CorelDraw*. I  
have downloaded and tested  
*Streamline* and it did nothing  
more or better than *CorelTrace*  
does for the extra US\$200.

As for other standalone soft-  
ware packages for converting  
raster (bitmap) images to vec-  
tor, I'm not sure the folks who  
researched this article know  
how to do an Internet search. I  
spent about two minutes (not  
two days) typing 'Bitmap to  
vector conversion software'  
into the Google search para-  
meter and came up with pages  
of listings. *Adobe Streamline*  
appeared about half way down  
the second page. I have tested  
*EuroVector* in the past (good,  
but kind of pricey) and I now  
have two other demos down-  
loaded for testing, both under  
US\$100.

On a positive note, the  
'Tips for better tracing' were  
very good, but on the whole,  
this article was a major disap-  
pointment. I have come to ex-  
pect better research and a  
more balanced viewpoint from  
your publication.

**ELLEN FARETIS  
ELBY GRAPHICS  
TORONTO**