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Digital Video Editing Software
Adobe Premiere 6.5

by Kirby Ferguson

Adobe Premiere 6.5 is certainly not an upgrade that will set your pulse racing. In fact, when you open the application for the first time, you'll be hard-pressed to tell that this is an upgrade at all—the workspace is identical to that of Premiere 6. Still, although the handful of additions are not readily apparent, most Premiere users will find them indispensable.

THE BIG THREE

In essence, Premiere 6.5 consists of just three new features: Real-Time Previews, the Title Designer, and the MPEG Encoder (which is Windows-only). Sure, Adobe puts some other goodies in the package to sweeten the deal, but these are the three additions which will make or break this upgrade for you.

The most exciting of the new features is Real-time Previews. Simply hit “enter” (not spacebar, for some reason) and in real-time Premiere displays any and all effects, transitions and titles you've used—provided your processor can keep up. (Unlike Final Cut Pro, real-time in Premiere works for all its effects.) The program automatically reduces frame rate and image quality if your system can't maintain the pace. Like other video editors offering real-time previews, you still need to do a final render before exporting your project.

The performance of Premiere's real-time felt solid and smooth on my 800 MHz Pentium 3, the minimum system recommended by Adobe. With immediate display of effects, transitions and titles, I found it much easier to pursue or discard different creative directions. Unless you're already enjoying real-time previews thanks to a dedicated video card, this feature alone will justify the upgrade.

Premiere 6's titler was a remarkably crude tool, suitable for only the most rudimentary of typesetting and graphics tasks. The new Title Designer is a dramatic improvement and operates like a cross between After Effects and Photoshop. You get a bona fide pen tool, text on a path, four-point gradients, and the ability to save custom styles, to cover just a few of the new features. The new titler also sports a large collection of templates for common titling requirements.

Nonetheless, the new Title Designer leaves room for improvement. I was disappointed that its extensive features cannot be keyframed. Sure, you can make your titles move around the screen, but that's about the extent of its animation capabilities. For instance, you can't keyframe kerning settings, allowing you to make letters appear to float apart. I'd love to see some basic After Effects-like animation features integrated into future upgrades of the titler designer. I was also surprised at the lack of a basic illustration function like grouping.

Gripes aside, the new titler is an enormous improvement and eliminates the need to switch over as frequently to Illustrator or Photoshop to massage type and graphics.

With its revamped MPEG encoding and the inclusion of Sonic Solutions' DVDIt LE, Premiere is now a viable means to author DVDs. The programs can now render to a wide variety of MPEG formats suitable for DVD, Super Video CD, Video CD,

and cDVD. The resulting files can even be automatically imported into DVDIt, ready for you to complete authoring. Unfortunately, these new MPEG and DVD features are for Windows-users only. Mac users get left out in the cold.

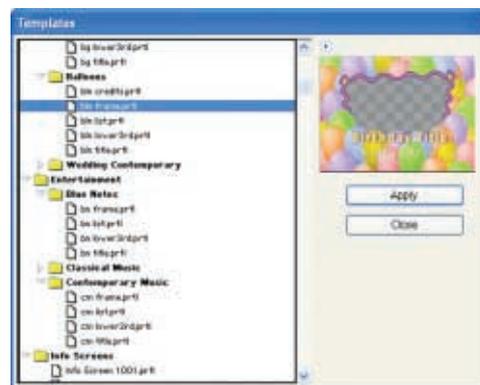
THE PADDING

In addition to bug fixes and small tweaks, Adobe has fleshed out the upgrade with a nice selection of add-ons—90 PostScript fonts, five new After Effects filters, and some new audio effects from TC Works (for Windows) and the audio application Sparkle LE (for Macintosh).

Perhaps the most substantial of these additions is SmartSound QuickTracks, a good way to put together quick soundtracks. Just choose a style of music and its length and QuickTracks does the rest. Sure, the results sound generic, but some-



One of Premiere 6.5's most appealing new features is its excellent Title Designer, a massive improvement over its antiquated predecessor.



The revamped Title Designer also packs in plenty of templates for those quick projects.



ADOBE PREMIERE 6.5

System Requirements

For Macintosh

- PowerPC G3 or faster processor (G4 or G4 dual recommended)
- Mac OS 9.2.2 or Mac OS X v.10.1.3
- 64MB RAM (128MB or more recommended)
- 600MB available hard disk space for install
- QuickTime 5.0.2
- For DV: QuickTime compatible FireWire (IEEE 1394) interface, large-capacity hard disk or disk array capable of sustaining 5MB/sec, and FireWire 2.7
- For third-party capture cards: Adobe Premiere certified capture card
- For Real-Time Preview: G4 processor (G4 dual recommended)

For Windows

- Intel Pentium III 500MHz processor (Pentium 4 or multiprocessor recommended)
- Microsoft Windows 98 Second Edition, Windows Millennium Edition, Windows 2000 with Service Pack 2, or Windows XP
- 128MB RAM (256MB or more recommended)
- 600MB available hard-disk space for install
- QuickTime 5.0 recommended
- For DV: Microsoft DirectX certified IEEE 1394 interface, dedicated large-capacity 7200RPM UDMA 66 IDE or SCSI hard disk or disk array, and DirectX compatible video display adapter
- For third-party capture cards: Adobe Premiere certified capture card
- For Real-Time Preview: Pentium III 800MHz processor (Pentium 4 dual processors recommended)

Pricing

Suggested list US\$549 (approx. CDN\$929)

Adobe Systems
Web www.adobe.com

times generic is all you need. For prestige projects, you'll require an actual flesh 'n blood musician or a looping application such as Sonic Foundry's Acid, which offers much more control.

SO WHO NEEDS IT?

Most Premiere users will find this upgrade a no-brainer. Real-time previews and the new titler are major new features that will let you work more quickly and more intuitively. And for those delving into DVD production (and using Windows), the new MPEG encoder and bundled DVDit will have equal appeal. The generous assortment of add-ons is hardly essential, but they add a few niceties that should come in handy. For the majority of Premiere 6 users, this upgrade will easily make up for its upgrade cost in saved time and headaches.

However, for those of you who are using Premiere 6 and already enjoying real-time playback from a dedicated video card, I can't give Premiere such an unabashed endorsement. The appeal of the upgrade then boils down to your use of the other two big features: the titler and MPEG Encoder.

If you're considering a switch from a competing program like Final Cut Pro or Vegas Video—well, don't bother (unless you're hell-bent on an all-Adobe workflow). Although this upgrade brings Premiere 6.5 to approximate parity with these applications, it still doesn't manage to surpass them. Premiere just isn't compelling enough yet to merit the hassle and expense of a switch.

And lastly, for those of you looking to purchase your first video editor, Premiere is a solid, safe choice, especially if you're already using oth-

er Adobe applications. It's less expensive than Final Cut Pro or Avid Xpress DV and more ubiquitous than Vegas Video, although I wouldn't go so far as to say Premiere is superior to any of them.

With this upgrade, Adobe has addressed several of Premiere's most glaring shortcomings. Even though the new features in this upgrade are few, they are important, and Adobe makes the package a better value by packing in a respectable collection of extras. 🍌

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Premiere 6.5's MPEG Export works quickly and painlessly from this elegant screen. Exported MPEGs can be automatically opened with DVDit and you can commence authoring. Alas, this feature is Windows-only.



SmartSound QuickTracks allows you to automatically generate scores for your video. The selection of tunes included is modest and they sound generic, but this is a good way to generate some quick music when you're in a pinch.