

Freehand: the software that wouldn't die

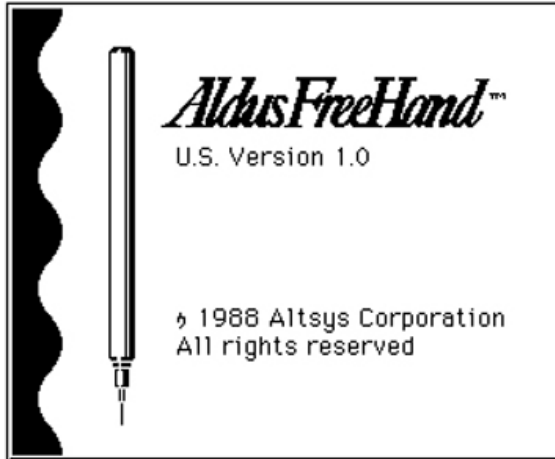
Digital, Graphic Design

Posted by Patrick Burgoyne, 16 May 2012, 9:54 [Permalink](#) [Comments \(79\)](#)

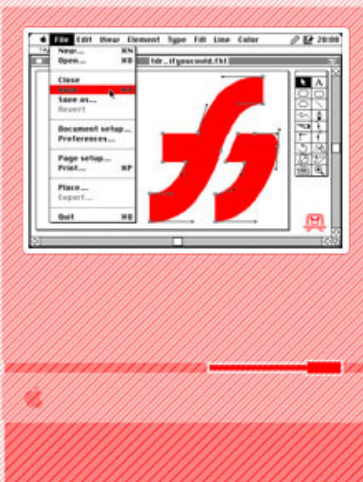
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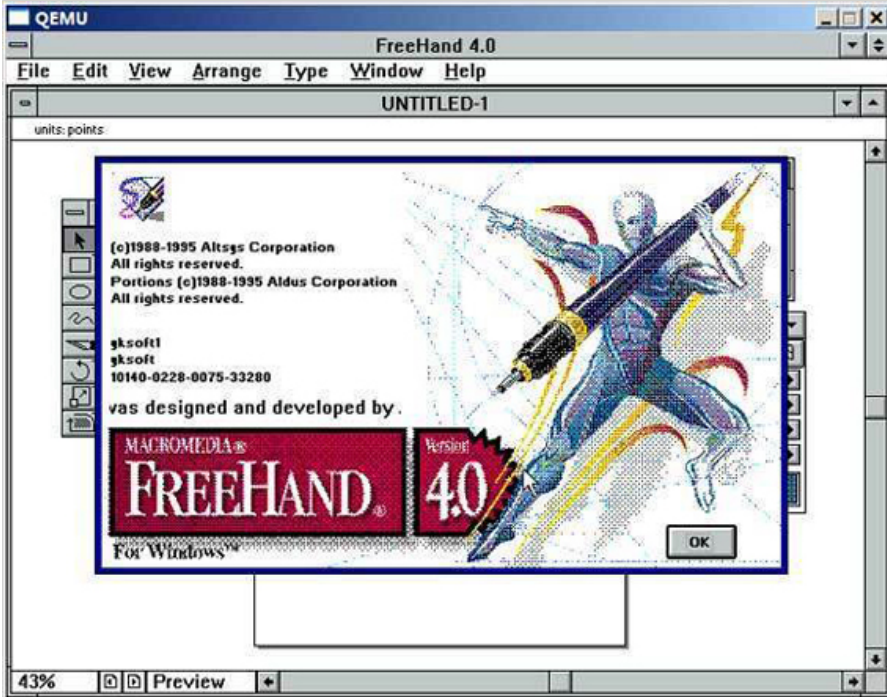
[1](#)



In the March 2009 issue of CR, Michael Johnson wrote of a strange phenomenon: the diehard fans of an obsolete piece of software who refuse to bow to the inevitable and switch to more modern alternatives. His story, which has just topped 200 comments, has become a kind of self-help group for FreeHand adherents. A place to reminisce, to mourn the seemingly imminent loss of an old friend. But, thanks to legal action in the US, FreeHand may have a future

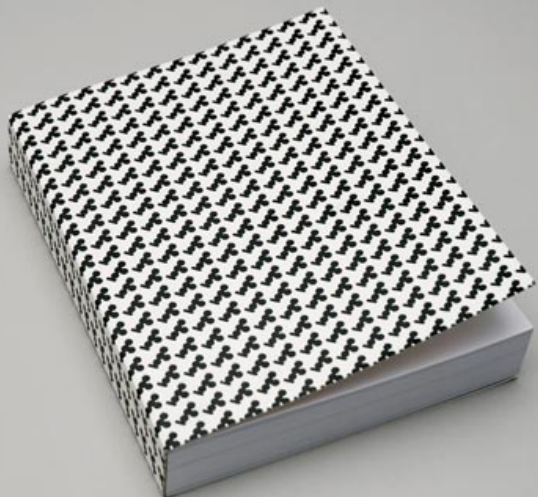


Johnson's original piece was prompted by the discovery that, like him, many designers were clinging on to their ancient copies of FreeHand, despite the fact that the software was no longer supported and was becoming increasingly more difficult to use thanks to its incompatibility with newer applications and operating systems.



Originally launched by Aldus in 1988, FreeHand became a favourite among many designers and illustrators thanks to its ease of use and functionality. Adobe acquired Aldus in 1994 but, citing concerns that Adobe might monopolise the vector graphic software business, the US Federal Trade Commission required Adobe to get rid of FreeHand and not to acquire it again for 10 years. Once the 10-year period ended, Adobe acquired Macromedia (FreeHand's then owner) and, although it continues to sell [FreeHand MX](#), a version dating from that period, promptly discontinued support for the software.





However, that didn't stop a dwindling ban of FreeHand diehards – including Spin, who used FreeHand on its Logo book (above), Jonathan Barnbrook and DixonBaxi – who continued to use the package, relying on workarounds and multiple re-starts to keep it running on modern machines. And, as the response to Johnson's piece made clear, they are far from alone.

"I thought I was completely alone. I'm so happy. (Sniff!)" typed Frank, holding back the tears as he discovered the post.

"I have eighteen years of archived projects in Freehand, and as a brand identity designer, I'm going grey(er) at the prospect of not being able to continue using my beloved Freehand" said James Goodchap.

"Resist, resist, resist" cried Rich.

These are just a few of the 200 comments from all over the world that the post has attracted. The initial rush may have fallen away but still a steady stream comes to confess that yes "My name is x and I use FreeHand".

But all is not lost. A US group calling themselves [FreeFreeHand](#) is fighting for the future of the software. It aims to pressure Adobe into either updating the programme itself or releasing the code and licensing to the OpenSource community, so that it may be developed by others.

Last year, along with four independent designers, FreeFreeHand launched a [class action antitrust lawsuit](#) against Adobe in California. "Adobe has engaged in unlawful, willful acquisition and maintenance of monopoly power in the market for professional vector graphic illustration software," the complaint alleged. "Since acquiring FreeHand, Adobe has significantly raised the price of Illustrator while, at the same time, effectively removing FreeHand from the market by failing to update the program."

Adobe, for its part, denies any wrongdoing and has been contesting the allegations in the suit. "Even an alleged monopolist is entitled to raise its prices and make its own product decisions," its lawyers argued in a [motion to dismiss the action](#). Adobe has further argued that "all companies have the right to unilaterally discontinue product lines" and that it cannot be forced to develop and support multiple product lines within its own portfolio.

At the end of March, Adobe and the plaintiffs went through a legal process known as mediation which is an attempt to resolve the issue without going to court. Hopefully, compromise can be reached. If not, the case is due to come to court on April 1, 2013.

So FreeHand lovers, don't give up hope just yet.

Read Michael Johnson's [original story here](#).



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CR in Print

The May issue of Creative Review is the biggest in our 32-year history, with over 200 pages of great content. This special double issue contains all the selected work for this year's Annual, our juried showcase of the finest work of the past 12 months. In addition, the May issue contains features on the enduring appeal of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, a fantastic interview with the irrepressible George Lois, Rick Poyner on the V&A's British Design show, a preview of the controversial new Stedelijk Museum identity and a report from Flatstock, the US gig poster festival. Plus, in Monograph this month, TwoPoints.net show our subscribers around the pick of Barcelona's creative scene.

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79 Comments

My first job out of uni (about 20 months ago) was at a studio who still used both freehand and Quark. Quark was relatively simple to pick up and did its job ok (albeit not half as good as indesign) but freehand was a nightmare.

Having had an education based around the adobe creative suite, it just seemed so limiting and redundant. It seems so dated I'm not sure why anyone would opt to still use it. It's like using letraset to lay out a poster.

Matt
2012-05-16 12:59:25

MCP will be delighted!
[Luke Tonge](#)
2012-05-16 13:13:55

Despite Adobe owning both programs, Freehand still does many things well that Illustrator struggles with - pasting objects inside other objects, running type around the top and bottom of a circle or even having a preview of a line you are drawing with the pen tool in real-time (rather than having to click a point to see where the line will be drawn) are three areas where Freehand is STILL after all these years better than Illustrator.

You have to remember "back in the day" Illustrator would only let you work in outline mode whilst Freehand let you work direct in preview mode which is one reason Freehand gained many loyal users. To this day I would say that Illustrator has a massive feature set, but amazingly it is frustrating and unintuitive to use. Sad really as having seen Photoshop improve time after time over the years, Illustrator has increased feature bloat, but not improved on usability.

[Simon Watson](#)
2012-05-16 14:00:03

The pen tool in Freehand was/is far superior.
[Rob](#)

2012-05-16 14:19:44

I lament the demise of Freehand but knew it was coming with Adobe taking over. There are many features that were much easier and much better done in FH but since FH has not moved with technology and time stopped for it, I imagine it is clumsy working with it today. Not really a fair assessment. Adobe much not be able to integrate those long lost great features.

Cathy

2012-05-16 14:40:06

Long Live Freehand!

Lydia

2012-05-16 16:14:20

Hi Patrick

Nice update, ta

I'll admit two things:

a) I've had to start using Illustrator just to keep the interns from laughing at me

b) There are still moments, almost everyday, when I curse it and remember a quicker/better/more efficient way to do it with Freehand

Yours

Michael Johnson

Michael Johnson

2012-05-16 16:41:21

Freehand was also ahead of Illustrator, Photoshop, and Quark as a master compositing application for some kinds of print work. You could combine vector graphics, reasonable amounts of text, and pixel graphics in an easy to use multi-layer and (limited) multi-page document.

Granted, Freehand did not have the rich set of pixel manipulation tools on offer in Photoshop, but the combination of Freehand and Photoshop was very powerful and worked together very well. We used it for hundreds of packaging projects by converting the native Freehand .FHD output to PDF for commercial printing.

In recent years Photoshop added vector tools, and InDesign and Quark offer better support for vector graphics, but I doubt that there is a better tool for packaging, maps and other types of specialized print production. And Illustrator still pisses me off every time...

Stephen Hill

2012-05-16 22:48:06

I never laughed at you Michael.

I was taught Macromedia Freehand 10 whilst at college, and remember it being easier and quicker than Illustrator.

Good luck to them.

Jacob Pover

2012-05-16 23:59:10

Call me a luddite and send me to hell, but I still use Freehand every day for all my vector art needs.

Freehand runs circles around Adobe Illustrator. It always did and always will. AI v1 was a bad copy of FH. Adobe splatters its pretty little flower and butterfly branding all over its products. Whatever. I will never, ever, ever buy anything from Adobe as long as it continues to try killing Freehand. Adobe is an evil corporate monster.

To see work I've created with Freehand, visit <http://www.art101.com/freehand>

My name is Andy Markley and I use Freehand. Art, like morality, consists of drawing the line somewhere.

Andy M

2012-05-17 00:43:50

One wonders why Adobe don't take the good bits of Freehand and integrate them with Illustrator?!

Andy

2012-05-17 09:40:26

Right point of view Andy!

Chiara

2012-05-17 10:35:14

I still use it.

I'm getting up to speed with illustrator (and all Macs are Snow Leopard/Lion dual boot to accommodate iCloud switch), but experience makes it twice as quick to use and it's still a beautifully intuitive and aesthetically more pleasing to work with. Never had any compatibility problems exporting to illustrator or eps files for artwork (and do tend to tweak colours in Photoshop),

all done in Freehand:

<http://www.nathandaniels.com>

Nathan Daniels

2012-05-17 10:43:00

And now it doesn't work at all with Lion (amongst many other gripes I have with it!)

Dan Moore

2012-05-17 10:45:53

It was a crafted programme aligned to how a designer's mind worked... not the other way round as so many programmes would have us behave today... The King is dead. Long live the King!

Stephen Kirk

2012-05-17 12:45:26

Freehand is better. Fact. Freehand lives here. Power in the darkness... etc

Ian Anderson

2012-05-17 12:56:17

I like many of those posting here am a Freehand fan from way, way back. Like most here I cut my teeth on photomechanical transfer cameras, bromides, galleys of type and the smell of wax in the morning. Then the computer did away with our beloved drafting boards, set squares and Rotring pens. So we launched ourselves into the digital age on 12 in screens, 1.5 mb floppy disks and massive 20mb hard drives. And it was Freehand that cushioned our abrupt introduction to artwork that didn't involve drafting film and rubylith. And for all its problems it largely did everything we needed it to. Combined with Photoshop it was an unbeatable programme for creating vector graphics, brochures, packaging, labels and annual reports. Multi page layouts, intuitive tools and commands became second nature to those of us old enough to remember what it was like to have to courier artwork to printers on Syquest cartridges or Jaz drives. And although I have, after years of procrastination, finally migrated to Illustrator, hardly a day goes by where I don't find myself trying to do some of the simplest tasks that would have been a breeze in Fh but are cumbersome and laborious in Ai. I still have Freehand MX on all the machines I own that can still run it, and still drop back in there to get something done 10 times quicker than Illustrator will allow, but unless there is a last minute reprieve from the Free Freehand suit (I'm a signed up member) then we will sadly see this fine tool of the graphic designer go the way of the Linotype, photo typesetter and letaset. There will only be quirky online videos of die hard FH users, sitting at their pre Lion Macs, watching as text wraps caused words to disappear (that I DON'T miss) and caressing their machines to allow just one more logo to be crafted in the software of their design youth. My name is Alex and I AM a Freehand user.

Alex

2012-05-17 13:01:35

I've now got up to speed with Illustrator (if you can ever class something taking me twice as long and with twice as many steps, "getting up to speed") having used Freehand from version 1 onwards, but if I need to do something quickly and efficiently I still automatically go back to Freehand to do it.

Its ability to manipulate shapes and paste inside makes it so much easier to use and it's always been much more intuitive than ever Illustrator has. I follow the FreeFreehand "rebels" with great interest. Lets hope Freehand can be saved for a future generation to use and enjoy!

Lisa

2012-05-17 13:08:58

My name is x and I use FreeHand.

The only thing I believe Freehand is updated is because it's lack of opentype support.

x

2012-05-17 13:11:32

Adobe apps have more power but are much slower--- freehand is faster than illustrator and quark is faster than indesign. I switched from freehand to illustrator since adobe bought macromedia. I knew adobe would dump freehand...

Miguel Rocha

2012-05-17 13:14:44

Never stopped using it, it's the BOSS for logos. Illustrator is just irritating. I'm surprised Adobe don't just re-release it. I'm sure they'd make a couple of quid off it, something they seem to like a lot.

>Lil _Pete.

2012-05-17 13:17:56

Reading the comments brings back so many memories. Sadly frustrating memories. Roll on CS6.

Next you will be telling me there are Corel Draw diehards out there.

Kieran

2012-05-17 13:30:31

Freehand is the first program I open in the morning and the last one to close. Is basically my main tool.

I really hope there's a way to settle an open source for this program. Change is good when it involves progress, but we are keeping ourselves to create better if we let this great tool disappear.

Alex Trochut

2012-05-17 13:37:44

I still use Freehand (Windows version) in a window on my Mac, as it's much easier to use than Illustrator. The pen tool in Illustrator is enough to make my blood boil. But in fact I my first port of call these days is to use Xara Designer, which is much closer to Freehand's ease of use and still actively updated. If I won the lottery I'd fund a native Mac version of Xara.

matt

2012-05-17 13:41:06

Always liked freehand. Love it, is it really still going, bless it.

"My name is Cheesy and I am a freehand user."

This is starting to sound a lot like an AA meeting.

Cheesy

2012-05-17 13:59:58

While I admire the FreeHand project and have donated to the legal fund - it should have used the money to promote a Kickstarter project.

With almost 7000 members - a small 'investment' would have got this up and running in very little time.

The original team who coded Freehand, some retired, could have been approached and had something on the market by now.

Adobe will drag this out for the next decade while that small iDraw App will probably be snapped up by Apple and start making some inroads into the Vector market - here's hoping.

Still use Freehand daily.

http://www.10on12.com/notebook/freehand_v_illustrator/

SID

2012-05-17 14:19:38

FreeHand is an extension of my hand, it just flows seamlessly with my creative process. I tried AI, believe me. I happen to be the kind of user who can find his way through a new software quite fast. I don't think it's me if I say that something feels wrong, weird, unpleasant in AI compared to FH. So far, I still can live without Lion. So I'm holdin' on.

DeeMo

2012-05-17 14:38:58

@Andy: Illustrator has eventually included features like perspective and multiple pages(!). However, it still isn't as flexible with positioning gradients (or most things) within shapes and other drawing features. Illustrator does have better built-in effects and smart guides can save time sometimes (although they are hit-and-miss). An old colleague used to set long documents in FreeHand in 20 page segments - I don't miss those crashes!

The drawing tools in programs like FreeHand and Flash do seem more forward-looking. The way Flash deals with shapes is very different but it lets you combine segments and lines even quicker than FreeHand.

Decimal

2012-05-17 15:01:40

I was using only yesterday. It's just muscle memory for me.

I use Illustrator CS5 too and I'm constantly confounded by and it make life a misery for me.

Nick O

2012-05-17 15:14:44

Kieran, I am a die hard CoreDRAW user. Have used it and continue to use for over 20 years now. Far more intuitive than Illustrator and has as many features as Freehand. A great PDF engine and pre-flight (once configured), great clipping as well. I still export all my files to Illustrator for those who need them and it works fine. In fact many of the publications I work with say my PDF outputs are far easier to handle and better packaged than their other clients. Not the most stable, but what software is these days. Too much snobbery around software in this industry if you ask me.

6136

2012-05-17 15:48:26

I'm not against Freehand use, despite I quit using it many years ago. I have to agree that it's kinda nostalgic and brave at the same time, the fact that so many people are still fighting to support it, but... Come on! Digital art evolves as well as tech tools. Don't make the experimentation with new environments and the aim of reinventing oneself the good designers who contribute to art evolution?

It's like browsers: why use Explorer 6-8 when you can enjoy so many incredible features with the latest versions of Chrome or Firefox?

In some years I might be the one defending and discussing about the godness of Illustrator, because another advanced next generation software has surpassed it...

...And the world goes round and we cannot stop it.

Elenation

2012-05-17 17:54:42

I am Luis Fitch and I use Freehand!

Luis fitch

2012-05-17 18:06:53

I've been a Freehand user since Freehand 1 and installed it on my brand new Macintosh FDHD with a 20 meg hard drive with 4 megs of RAM. I was newly out of design school and hired the guy who set up the Boston Globe newspaper on Macs to train me. I learned Freehand and Pagemaker and a few other programs that I didn't stick with. I've enjoyed the good and the bad versions of Freehand. The writing was on the wall when Adobe purchased Pagemaker and Freehand. I'm still using the Snow Leopard OS as I learned about the lack of support (no Rosetta) only after downloading Lion. I was fortunate enough to think doing a search for "Freehand and OS Lion" first. Lion is still in cue and waiting to be installed.

I'll be a Snow Leopard user until Freehand is reborn.

Robert E

2012-05-17 22:16:07

I agree in some respects with that you're all saying. Adobe do just sit on software rather. Everything is held back, I'm really surprised at how little Photoshop has changed.

TBH we're going to have to go open source. It should be done in league with universities. The software tools for design should not be

private.

Switching to an all-open-source workflow at the moment would be horrific. I'd go crazy.

It should be possible to pay programmers bounties. I bet you that if the arts universities figured out how much they were paying for software, and dedicated that budget to developing some cutting edge future-proofed systems, we'd end up with some proper design tools.

The first place to start would be to create a programming framework designed for the GHz machines with GPUs, with which to create the software applications.

Of course, the user interface for such a system should be visual, and based on open technology, probably based on a web browser.

Problem with open-source it's it's often so amateur, so badly designed. This is because it's usually made by rogue C++ geeks who are comfortable with the UNIX terminal's level of visual polish. Open source is a world with very few proper visual designers in it. That should change. It has to change.

da bishop

2012-05-18 15:43:49

so as a thought exercise, let's say that the Adobe agrees to donate the Freehand source code to some open source foundation. Who exactly is going to invest the very large number of hours it will take to turn a 10 year old piece of software into something more modern? None of the people actually using the software are going to be able to do it, so that means convincing some talented developers that they should invest their time into fixing Freehand.

Are there enough Freehand users willing to throw real money at those programmers to fix it? And when i say real money, this is not a small project. It could cost tens of thousands of dollars, easy.

Lucinda M

2012-05-20 18:12:56

I loved Freehand, reading this brings back many memories, so much so that I just looked into buying it for home use (office would never go for it), and confused by this: Not been updated for x years, not compatible with x, doesn't support x etc... and yet still costs £400 to buy...

Erica

2012-05-21 14:32:08

I've downgraded from Lion to SL to be able to still using FH. Illustrator Color Managment it is a nightmare; actually, all Illustrator it is a nightmare.

Ruben Hernandez

2012-05-22 06:03:08

I love Freehand but finally I've stopped using it because of Lion and because I've been applying for jobs proficiency in AdobeCS is all they want!

Maggie

2012-05-22 12:10:57

I can't believe the number of closet Freehand heads there are! I used it back in the day, but have been using Illustrator since version 1.

Ken O\\Brien Graphic Design

2012-05-22 13:34:05

Back in 2007, when Adobe announced the end of FreeHand and our migration to Illustrator, I was eager to expect that the best of each application was going toward creating a "super" vector drawing app. After 5 years, only a few feature "nuggets" from FreeHand were introduced into Illustrator and none of the most fundamental functions or processes. Really, how often is the Perspective Tool needed compared to rounding a single corner or two of a rectangle? Any FreeHand user knows what I am talking about here and could add their missing essentials.

I find Illustrator is a daunting application to learn for both my beginner design friends AND for seasoned FreeHand-users. It is the intuitive simplicity that takes one click in FreeHand to accomplish 2-3 clicks in Illustrator; or as one user called AI's lack of user experience patterns: "A thousands little islands that aren't linked by any rational thinking." This is what makes FreeHand still highly in demand with designers in the creative process. Adobe could learn plenty from this and certainly make a better product by understanding how creatives think and perform. The FreeHand developers knew this and built upon it.

I've gotten to be fairly proficient with Illustrator but still roll my eyes at some Rube Goldberg process that achieves a simple result. For me, what it comes down to is this: with all the bells and whistles announced in each new Illustrator version, having one less bell-and-whistle would be far better if fundamental tools were streamlined, a more simple intuitive interface was built, and basic common features found in FreeHand (and CorelDraw) were incorporated.

In the end, when time is of the essence for my client, I will fire up FHMx.

mark

2012-05-22 22:16:11

My name is Cindy, I am a Freehand User.

Come on Adobe .. really? I am currently RIGHT NOW in the middle of transferring a wonderfully designed (and riddled with layers, styles and text formatting) 156 page book into InDesign and am, at the moment despising Adobe. Formatting text (I mean really formatting it - some of you know what i mean) is like pulling all of my teeth out with tweezers. I do LOVE Photoshop, but for god's sake if they are going to FORCE us to stop using Freehand, can't they at least make the whole darn migration easier. I must say that InDesign is much more welcoming than Illustrator. Illustrator is a JOKE I can begin, revise, create three renditions, revise and finalize a project in Freehand with the speed of light while in Illustrator I want to become a barista at Starbucks. Freehand just makes sense and is smart. Illustrator is a cluster----. Sorry. Streamline people ... yeah Mark, we're on the same page. Less bells, more intellect. Whenever I need to get something

done in a hurry ... FREEHAND WINS. It's great to know I'm not alone. Thanks people. Freehand ROCKS.

Cindy

2012-05-24 17:59:31

I have decades of experience with software, including Adobe software. I know my Alt-clicks, Ctrl-clicks, right-clicks, use the space bar when Adobe wants me to, know that some things may only be found in menus, use keyboard shortcuts extensively, in short I'm certainly no computer illiterate. But the latter is exactly what Illustrator turns me into. Illustrator appears to be designed to make you go mental. Unbelievable. Microsoft no longer is the bane of software development. Adobe took that role with its inconsistent products and absent quality control.

Tom

2012-05-28 02:04:21

I work for a huge US music company and have to hide the fact that I still use freehand. Illustrator is industry standard now. I dread getting Ill files from newbie designers. Editing is almost impossible. Some files have hundreds of layers. Nobody seems to know how to close a path. Just a mass of random vector lines with color fills. what a joke. It would be great if someone would invest the money to produce a modern version of FH. I personally would pay 500.00 to 1000.00 US for it.

wv-cooper

2012-05-31 16:10:43

I have taught both Freehand and Illustrator over the years and I can tell you that students who have used Freehand utterly loathe Illustrator and find the drawing tools unintuitive, clumsy and hateful to use. I taught a group of fashion students last year Illustrator from scratch - no experience of vector software - after about 5 weeks I let them use Freehand to draw fashion illustrations. 'Why the fuck have we been using that awful Illustrator?' was the comment I received from the entire group! A group of 1st Year ND Art students took many, many weeks of coaxing to stick with Illustrator - Freehand would have them merely a couple of sessions to grasp - I have found this over and over again with students and staff alike!

The drawing tools need to be taken from Freehand and morphed into Illustrator - I simply can't understand why Adobe hasn't done this - probably the arrogance they have inherited from Quark Systems!

Learning Illustrator vector tools is unnecessarily unwieldily for newbies and tiresome to the point of screaming rage to those who have learned the simplicity of Freehand drawing.

David Wellings

2012-06-05 19:57:51

I've got to laugh... after I groan interminably... On Facebook today, Adobe is drumrolling a (gasp!) new feature in AI CS6...

(<https://www.facebook.com/AdobeIllustrator/>) "a sneak peek of the NEW Package files feature for Adobe Illustrator CS6!" (Of course, FH users will recognize the similarity to FH's "Collect For Output" feature that's been around for years...)

My comment on FB: "My, my, my, AI CS6 is finally catching up with Aldus/Macromedia FreeHand 5 (1995: 17 years ago!), 7, 8, 9, 10, MX... Adobe has owned FreeHand since 2005... why did it take 7 years to include this extremely useful FreeHand feature in AI? #Why I Still Use FH Every Chance I Get! (I have AI 10 , AI CS2 & AI CS5)"

I've used FH since 1995, and still use FH10 (2001) on Win 7 every chance I get. Sure, AI has some cool features that FH doesn't... but it's also monumentally clunky and the file sizes for equivalent layouts get huger and huger (rapidly approaching ginormous!) with every version of AI. Long live FreeHand!!

Rose Beaudry

2012-08-14 19:08:42

Perhaps current users of FreeHand would like you comment (and supprt) development of a New FreeHand project by signing up to the FreeHand forums here: <http://www.freehandforum.org/> and there is an interview with the FreeHand creator here (when is was Aldus Freehand) here: <http://www.enrichdesign.com/fhblog/>.

Although many users are compelled to 'upgrade' to Illustrator it is also possible to continue using FreeHand using Sheepshaver emulation for Classic (os9) here: <http://www.emaculation.com/doku.php/sheepshaver>.

This may help some of us who are technically minded. Macromedia MX works in osx (10.4) and osx (10.5) under 'Rosetta' but also (identically) in Classic mode (os9) and under classic emulation (such as Shapehaver above) or you can use 'Parallels' to install an old copy of Tiger (10.4) on a partition (or spare drive) - without even using 'Rosetta' - which should work well enough for everybody who prefers a proper drawing package than 'Frusterator' can ever hope to be. Give FreeHand your support - if you use it - and help keep it alive!

Philip Searle

2012-08-14 21:30:23

After years of using Freehand - the equivalent of drawing on a piece of paper with a pencil, I am having to learn Illustrator - that is, to move the paper and keep the pencil still. The result is just about the same, but my brain actually hurts and my shoulders seize up when I'm trying to do something that was really easy in FMX - pasting shapes into shapes, aligning vectors nodes, joining shapes, fine-tuning nodes and the whole line not moving. Etc. Etc. Freehand rocks for simple vectors - maps, logos and merging shapes.

Hurst Vanrooj

2012-08-21 14:56:58

Just beginning to learn InDesign. I can see why Adobe needed to smother Freehand. A little more Freehand development would have rendered InDesign superfluous.

What becomes noticeable with deep use of Freehand and Illustrator is the quality of the coding. That Freehand still works at all is a testament to some very hip and cohesive coding. Can we get those guys and their latter day "craftsman" coders to come up with a modern day equivalent to FH?

What a lot of Illustrator users don't seem to get is that a lot of the animus against Illustrator wells up from a resentment against an essentially bullying attitude by Adobe, who are rapidly becoming the new Microsoft.

(only in their case the Anti-Trust case actually stuck.)

A forced change from a well coded program to an awkward, bloated bells and whistley program is what adds the heat to the resentment.

Imagineer

2012-09-11 00:55:01

I can't live without FreeHand! my ageing G4 just died and since I had upgraded my newer iMac to Lion I can't open the 2.500 illustration files that I need for my business.... I just bought an new 'old' mac so I can get working again. Making FH available again either with a rosetta add-on from Apple or Adobe coding up for Lion would surely make economic sense?. I doubt anyone will stop buying Illustrator as it comes in the whole CS package anyway, but as an extra that would create a new income source surely?
I only use Frustrator as absolutely the last resort FreeHand is just the best....

Nick Webb

[Nick Webb](#)

2012-10-04 22:00:03

I am clinging on to FH10!!! Been using it since '95. Have recently been forced kicking and screaming in having to use Illustrator. I loathe and detest it, together with Adobe's attitude, they bought FH it then the chucked it. Bastards. They even took the mickey by allowing CS4 to open FH docs, then by CS5, did away with that facility. Surely what they are doing/have done to FH users is illegal? Many of us have tons of FH files that we need to still be able to work on/open. I agree with an earlier comment - Photoshop and Freehand together were, and for me still are a powerful combination - all you'd ever need to produce stunning graphics.

For instance, in Fh you had the option to "Copy/Paste attributes" - a very useful, quick way to change and format chunks of text without having to create a bloody style, and then get into a mess when clients start changing things around. That's just one of many niggles I have with Illustrator - there are dozens that really make me angry. I wish I could bill them for all the time I've wasted trying to find how to do the really simple things that you could do in FH, like, 'paste inside' and 'cut contents', apply strokes and fills from one simple panel... I could go on, and on, and on.

I really hope that they are able to Free Freehand! When and how will we find out?

InDesign? Don't get me started!!!!

Steve Jolliffe.

[Steve](#)

2012-11-06 19:40:32

Adobe started (and made fortune) by creating the PostScript Language, for the LaserWriter (1986 or so).

This team made only one thing later : Illustrator, a tool to create PostScript files. All other Adobe programs were made by other teams that they later acquired (PhotoShop was created by the Knoll brothers), and it took a long time before the UI was aligned with the rest of Adobe line-up.

Adobe is PostScript, therefore PDF. Illustrator was designed from bottom to top (PostScript features way up to the user), this is why mainly it is not humanly intuitive. It is an homage the output language beneath. Users have to kneel to it.

Freehand was created from top to bottom (he user's hand down to the output file), with no care for PS. For several years it was precisely its Achilles's heal, and many designers switched to Illustrator just because of superior postscript output. And some features of FH didn't export well to PS.

I use freehand since 1992 (FH 3.11) and never used Illustrator.

When you click a point, the selection is instantaneous. The responsiveness of the program (to me) is the main reason to love it. As a software engineer/designer, FH is my reference of what is well done in interface design, a fluid look and feel.

Many years ago, I've read that to make possible such a fast selection, they programmed all object to register their memory address in a pixel matrix, like a hidden color channel. Clic any pixel of a window and you got you object! Other program use a tree search to find what was clicked, many many milliseconds later. They also had a very efficient drawing algorithm. When you got that speedy duo, then you just pile up features wisely...

Adobe bought Macromedia because they needed to control where Flash was headed, which was becoming a competitor to PDF, their god. All the rest, they didn't really care... You even see now that they don't fight fiercely to defend Flash against the iOS barrier... PDF survived, queen PostScript is saved...

I have to switch from SnowLeopard to MountainLion, just because new iOS app must be done with the latest XCode because of the new iPad 4 having trouble with older apps... Grrr.

I do all software UI designs (and content and decorations) in FH...

I know I can dual boot but it is tedious in a workflow. How much time can I endure that? I wonder...

I feel caged.

It's nice to discover I'm not alone with fidelity to FreeHand..

I miss Director by the way.

[Alexandre Ayotte](#)

2012-12-12 04:24:48

How about we all call Adobe and ask that FreeHand features are added to CS future versions?

Nothing beats FreeHand if in any way you work in the printing industry.

Gustavo Forastiere

2013-03-11 16:56:43

How about we ask Adobe to "free" Freehand and let it live again in the wild, as it was meant to be? We designers/Illustrators and artists in general just want a program (app) that allows the intuitive process to guide our thinking and our designs. The world is a much worse place to design in without our beloved Freehand.

David O'Connor

May 16, 2013

David O'Connor

2013-05-17 00:14:12

Hi FreeHand Fans,

give me a FreeHand 8 and an old PhotoShop. I do all you want. Faster, cheaper and more creative.

Because I can all energy and time concentrate to realize my visions, perfectly!

Give me a modern Illustrator and a oversized PhotoShop. I will loose all fun at work. I will morph to an operater instead of a grafic designer.

I will work longer with less output.

That's the rason I still use my old Non-Intel-Mac as a "heile Welt" (ideal world) :-)

Question: Is there anybody who can help me to activate the shortcuts of FreeHand 8 in SheepShaver 2.4 with Mac OS 9.0.4 on a MacBookPro OS x 10.6.8 ? FileMaker 3.0 is working with shortcuts, but FreeHand 8 dom't react ...

Christoph

2013-06-17 22:23:49

Belongs to my comment 30 minutes ago:

Hi FreeHand Fans,

here ist the solution for loosing the short cuts of FreeHand 8 in SheepShaver 2.4:

There are one or some "xtras" that block the short cuts.

Now I use only my favorite xtra "Frarregelung" (color adjustment) ... and it works :-)

Christoph

2013-06-17 22:43:27

MY FREEHAND -- A LOVE STORY

My name is J R, and I AM A FREEHAND USER, ADDICT, and LOVER --

until she DIED two years ago in the deadly crash of my dual-boot G4.

Now, after two years without my dearly beloved FREEHAND -- being celibate to all other vector vixens also -- I was hoping that my sadness and depression for "the death of a loved one" had finally been quelled by the passage time.

Believing I was ready to start a new relationship, I decided to go to one of those online sites (Lynda.com) to get introduced to another vector darling, the very famous CS4 Ai. I proceeded cautiously into the "beginner" lessons -- taking baby steps, after such a traumatic experience!

After several dates with "A'ILLU" (a'illu, sounds Polynesian?) -- I was taking it slow and easy, in order to really get to know her without any prejudgements, misconceptions, or expectations. She was quite attractive, wearing some nice pallets -- although, Her toolbox was a bit smaller than I prefer, I could still use my pointer on her very responsive buttons.

But, fumbling like a virgin with her, I was feeling very inadequate -- she says, "Don't worry honey, you are learning how to do it -- just think of it as foreplay to the things I can do for you!"

Oh Boy, was I getting excited, and really wanting to go "all the way" -- seeming to have no modesty or inhibitions about pull down her menus, flashing those pop-up pallets, showing me what was under here, up there, and what this was for.

Wow A'illu, you are really stacked with features, sounding like a belly dancer with all these bells and whistles!! -- I can not wait to jump in, go at it with you, and see what we can create together.

... TO BE CONTINUED

J R Peters

2013-06-23 08:14:39

Um, yeah okay J R, you might want to get outside in the sunlight a bit more.

Like many others, I still use Freehand daily, I paid for it, and would pay for it again. I would also pay for Illustrator if there was a "Freehand switch" in the preferences, a check box to make the hot keys, tools, and GUI behave as closely to Freehand as possible (and easily configurable).

I know Mac and PC Freehand will work under virtualisation on newer Mac OSes (10.7, 10.8) but that's a load of messing around I'm not interested in. I want to draw stuff (remember the whole point of having this software? ...or has the point become only to make money for shareholders? ...but I digress)

so I'm also staying at Mac OS X 10.6.8 where Rosetta died.

By the time I find a Freehand replacement (be it something new or even Illustator itself if Adobe ever come to their senses), I'll probably be so far behind the OS X eight-ball that it'll be simpler to just drift over to cheaper box running Linux. Ho hum.

Harry B

2013-06-24 02:36:31

As a Point of Sale designer I have achieved great visuals with Freehand MX and love its intuitive design. Rendering transparency in perspex is easy I endorse everyones comments about the pen tool. Adobe's pen tool is an absolute pain to use.

The only aspect of Illustrator that I think scores over Freehand, is the layer pallet is more stable.(Object stay on the layer you place them) On complex multi-layered designs, sometimes objects in Freehand bounce to the wrong layer, which can be confusing, but easily rectified.

That said, I still depend on Freehand for all my vector based design work.

Mike Burns

2013-10-19 23:03:32

fucking hate freehand

freehand die

2013-11-04 08:19:03

To the Idiot who posted the last comment on 11-4-13:

Freehand is the program that I know and Love!!! I'm just now looking for a download version to go back to using the best graphics program that I have ever used and have found this site and am learning about the whole situation as I have been out of the graphics industry for several years and need to get back into using the program to create some new files for a business venture that I'm starting.

I am glad to see that there is a devoted following for this software and am looking forward to updating from my version of 9 to MX. As for the ridiculous comment above go back to whatever you're using and mind your own biased business.

C. Ragen

C. Ragen

2013-11-07 22:23:50

Since Adobe dropped Freehand and Golive I have dropped Adobe. Whatever they were, they aren't anymore and can definitely not be trusted.

However I can see Adobe's problem, their software is becoming generic as patents only last 20 years.

I now use Pixelmator, quicker and slicker than Photoshop plus looks better for a one off \$29.99. Premier is just for the PC crowd and imovie is fantastic and free. Final Cut is industry standard and Motion5 does all the comping I could ever need. As for inDesign, does anyone still print brochures?

RIP Adobe, that once was a print term.

Ken Jones

2014-01-06 12:00:00

This is amazing! Until now I thought that I that I was the sole inhabitant in a time-warp that is Aldus Freehand - I still COULD be, as I was so blown away by discovering that I wasn't totally alone in being a lover of Freehand, I haven't yet checked to see which versions of the program are under discussion!

I 'graduated' from carrying out automotive design work by producing rough hand-drawn sketches, and converting these - usually by hard graft, often involving finger-damaging, and sweaty work.

I was eventually 'persuaded' by those for whom I was now doing work for (around 1998/9) to start doing some of my design work on a new-fangled Mac 2, using a program called Aldus Freehand 3.1.. Believe me, as there was no one available to teach me anything, the transition from pencil/pen and paper was frustrating to say the least!!

Perseverance paid off - eventually, and I became quite comfortable doing my work by using these new hi-tech methods. I even upgraded Freehand to 3.1.1... WHOO!

Things progressed to the point where I was now producing artwork for full-colour brochures - albeit by having to use a degree of imagination due to the fact that although I had now got the use of a Mac LC10, which was more than capable of dealing with color, the gray-scale monitor that I was using was not! Not to worry, I still managed to get by!

Freehand 4 was released, and I took an instant dislike to it! Some of the features of 3.1.1 that I'd liked had vanished! The perfectly intuitive "Alignment" Tool that I liked was no longer available via the 2-key key-stroke, plus other features such as "Effects" in the Text menu being no longer there, meant that if I opened an earlier (3.1.1.) document in Freehand 4, it would effectively screw up my earlier work!

At this point, I started to lose interest in upgrades to Freehand, instead resolving to continue with 3.1.1.

I DID upgrade to FH 7 eventually, but only because I was able to open my 3.11 documents with it, and then 'save' them as "editable EPS's" which allowed me to open/edit them further in Photoshop 2 (at the time).

Already "long story short", I've resisted upgrading from the original OSX because Apple decided in their ultimate wisdom that availability of System 9 within OSX was no longer going to be supported - which obviously meant that my beloved Freehand would no longer be available to me!

I am STILL using Freehand (don't like Illustrator) and although having to 'save' and re-open in later versions, usually because of larger document sizes available for some of my Tech. drawings, and the ability save as PDFs etc, I'm happy to suffer the inconvenience by being able to work as I choose to.

I'm now going to read some of the comments of others who may have similar opinions to mine...

Vic Rollins

2014-01-31 02:57:04

I'm still using snow leopard just because of Freehand. If Freehand is so unimportant why doesn't Adobe let it go? There has got to be a reason. Illustrator - I've tried it many times and just could not get the hang of it. Its kind of like AutoCAD - its not for right-brained people - you just cant open it up and start working - you have to think logically instead of intuitively and that we all know is totally antithetical to the

drawing process. I really think its criminal what Adobe is doing with Freehand - they are holding so many users hostage to Illustrator. I used to think highly of Adobe. I'm sorry but process of creating in Illustrator is pathetic. I get angry just thinking about it. Why dont they let it "Free"? There is a reason its called Freehand - because its easy use - Easier to use than Illustrator will ever be. Creative Suite - Bwa ha ha. Illustrator is simply not creative - not in all of my experiences with it. Backwards - unintuitive. Adobe is really tarnishing their image with this. They are being completely arbitrary. NO LEGAL JUSTIFICATION FROM ADOBE CAN RECTIFY THE FACT THAT THERE IS SIMPLY NO SUBSTITUTE FOR FREEHAND! Its a ridiculous situation. SHIT OR GET OFF THE POT ADOBE - THIS IS LAME. I paid \$1000 for Macromedia studio back in 2004 mainly to have my own legal copy of Freehand so I could create my own branding, logos etc for websites. I will never buy Illustrator never never. I _WOULD_ purchase a new updated version of Freehand though. ADOBE I HOPE YOU'RE READING THIS ... W T F ?

Daniel Fuller

2014-02-19 17:08:58

And another thing. Sit any lawyer or judge for that matter in front of two screens - one with Illustrator and one with Freehand (bearing they have no experience with either) and ask them to draw anything - a box with a square in the middle - with each program. You have to video tape this process!!! I'll bet it will take them a fraction of the time to figure out how to do it in Freehand in comparison to Illustrator! "But Illustrator is a "PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM for PROFESSIONALS" ... You have thousands of professionals who know how to draw but cant stand Illustrator - (Same case with architects and AutoCAD) One thing Adobe can do is just suck it up, re-allocate their development resources away from just one of the score of totally useless bloatware and adminware they've been pushing on the market to REVIVE AND MAINTAIN FREEHAND WITH THE DIGNITY IT DESERVES. Hello Adobe - Illustrator is not a spontaneous and "creative" program - its backwards! ASK ANY ARTIST - or LAWYER for that Matter! If you really want to have your "Creative Suite" shine OFFER PEOPLE A GOOD OLE AMERICAN CHOICE - OFFER FREEHAND AS AN OPTION IN THE CREATIVE SUITE - MAYBE MORE ARTISTS WILL TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. FREEHAND and PHOTOSHOP would be a great combination - WAKE UP ABOUT FREEHAND ADOBE - FOR GOODNESS SAKE.

Daniel Fuller

2014-02-20 17:14:17

I'm Stuart and I still use Freehand. Retired now, but still use it occasionally. I still have AI on my machine for some reason, but haven't even tried to use it for years. Life is too short to try and perform a simple task on something so unintuitive. Started using Freehand in '97 and will never be without it, even if I have to keep a dedicated dinosaur machine to run it. It has never been surpassed. I'm so glad to find out that it isn't just me being a Luddite. Freehand still rules.

Stuart

2014-03-30 00:25:23

A couple years ago, I wrote my comments about FreeHand here. After all this time, I came across this old article today and was shocked how many comments have been added... and recently too! This says a lot about users and the program itself to warrant such loyalty.

As for me, I'm about to upgrade my Mac to Mavericks and run FreeHandMX using either Parallels or Fusion or VirtualBox with 10.6.8. I've read many success stories by other users doing this and it springs new life to this great program for the future. FreeHand is simply the easiest and most accurate vector drawing app there is. And yes, I do use Illustrator CC to do those things that FreeHand can't.

The loyalty here is amazing!

mark

2014-04-21 00:21:16

I got several jobs that I can't do now...since FreeHand stopped working a few month ago I feel handicapped...and I've lost money too do to that Illustrator is "an axe" in competency...everything takes at least twice as long to accomplish. I've lost my confidence in Illustrator's stupid interface...and I wonder...whom shall I bill (or kill) for this insanity and my suffering?

Seriously...please someone solve this and I will be very grateful. It's almost like someone has removed a part of my body now. // Johan in Stockholm • logos, maps and signs etc. FreeHand user since v2.0

Johan Svensson

2014-05-10 16:17:20

Just stumbled over the Twitter mention that this very blog entry is still being commented on – two years on. I'm not really surprised though. As long as there are workarounds I'll prefer FreeHand. A few 10.6.8 / Rosetta / .fh11 MBPs will definitely be maintained for a few more years to come... 8)

[Tomi Vollauschek](#)

2014-05-12 20:35:26

Just wish I could go back to Freehand. It was so easy and much more fun. Especially the pen tool.

Janne Wedenborg

2014-05-12 21:35:09

for lovers Free hand a video clip drawing in 1999

<https://vimeo.com/794542>

[benoit Millot](#)

2014-05-13 07:00:55

Still use it every day.

And Illustrator 11 years on is still not better.

Ez

2014-05-22 15:00:08

I too still use my beloved Freehand every day and curse Adobe every day by doing so. Adobe is living and soon to be dying by the sword. They need to listen to the customers.

Ken

2014-06-26 16:36:31

Found myself grinning all night like a happy kid after i finally found a way to get my beloved Freehand back to life via Parallels 9 and OSX 10.6.8 SL Server on my 2013 iMac (27"/17/32GB RAM) with OSX Mavericks 10.9.3. After using Freehand on my tweaked racing Cube for the last several years in OSX 10.5. i was tired of the constant switching between machines. It now works like a charm, everything i need is finally working on my iMac and even after so many years of cruel Adobe captivity and thus absence of updating it does neither look nor feel outdated, instead it is the same joy and ease of use i always loved in Freehand. The only one thing i can think of at the moment which would be a (small) point bothering me is the lack of OTF support, that is, i cannot use some large unicode/otf fonts and their special characters like flourishes and German Fraktur (brokensript) ligatures and extras as i would like to in Freehand, but that is about all i could complain about.

Freehand in this configuration seems to work perfect, but i have to wait and see if anything makes trouble on the long run, which i doubt, apart from the usual problems and smaller flaws everyone is used to when it comes to Freehand.

One important hint for anyone that wishes to install Freehand in OSX 10.6.8 SL Server on Parallels 9 is to download a small fix from the [dungeon-masters](http://helpx.adobe.com/content/dam/kb/en/504/cpsid_50468/attachments/FreeHand_MXa_Registration.zip) here:

http://helpx.adobe.com/content/dam/kb/en/504/cpsid_50468/attachments/FreeHand_MXa_Registration.zip

After installing this small file into > Macintosh HD/Library/Application Support/Macromedia everything works again and the non-startup-problem of Freehand in OSX 10.6.8 SL Server is solved and gone for good.

In regards to that dreadful piece of crappy software sold by Adobe, of which several others spoke about in former comments: NO! I hated that terrible, timewasting creativity-killer nicknamed "Frustrator" the moment i first tried to use it many, many years ago, i never could understand it let alone get anything useful done with it without getting utterly, utterly annoyed and unnerved.

The mere fact that even in 2014, many years after the last update, there are so many people everywhere being loyal and faithful to Freehand is a sure sign that not all is lost yet. Sooner or later someone will be able to get it freed, brought up-to-date and put back into the world in some way or another, i am absolutely sure.

JHM

2014-06-27 19:45:13

Since I set up my own print shop in the 90's I have only ever used Freehand, I sold the business in 2006, and brought the copy of studio mx with me to do occasional works. When my laptop died a couple of weeks ago, I upgraded to windows 8, which refuses to work well with freehand. Looking for an uptodate version, I feel like the kid who's just found out Santa's not real. Looks like I'll have to get another laptop that uses an older windows!!!

Tonymak

2014-07-10 22:30:56

Catalog building in Freehand:

File new, 200 pages (in the same file), happy simple typing, designing and importing, save, collect for output!

DONE!!!

Momedia

2014-07-16 01:10:45

This post is like finding an Oasis in a desolate land, I am an avid Freehand user, till now i still use it in all of my projects, most clients would request for an AI file i would just convert it to EPS, i keep both in my old 2008 Macbook and PC Windows 7 laptop...Adobe knows that FMX would always run circles around AI, if asked i would say i only use 2 application Photoshop and Freehand, gets the job done all the time.

Manny

2014-09-04 01:41:32

FreeHand users must look at the new Affinity Designer and Quasado Gravit!

These apps were heavily influenced by FreeHand users who have contributed to their development and both apps will open FH files. Gravit and Designer are what a "modern" FreeHand would have been if Macromedia had continued development.

Good times ahead for FH fans. Latest news at twitter.com/FreeFreeHand

[FreeHand Forums](#)

2014-10-03 18:57:49

For steve, stop spreading lies against Freehand please! Who told you that FreeHand is weak because Illustrator is better for EPS?? I used FreedHand from 1991 until 2002, Freehand was better than the actual Adobe Illustrator in printing and EPS. FreeHand had Gradients, types, paste in command, page size change, text bounding handles, layers! and a lot of smart tools early in 1991. People switched to Illustrator because of Adobe bundle sales. So steve stop hating FreeHand I all my life hated Illustrator users like you. Illustrator was the most awkward software to use, you have to lock or hide several elements in order to select one element in the background.

I am a technician in Offset printing, graphic design and worked in printing flashing companies, Free was a lot better than Illustrator for printing.

youssef

2014-10-25 11:37:39

I am a retired teacher of design. Over the years I drifted into computer graphics, and eventually relied on Photoshop, Freehand and Quark. While Photoshop was indispensable, and Quark (at that time) the work horse of DPT, it was Freehand that gave me the most pleasure.

As someone who started on an Apple II and then Mac Plus, I had the 'pleasure' of trying to use the first versions of Illustrator until I was told about Freehand. The difference was amazing. Easy to use and understand and with experience incredibly versatile and powerful. What is more important it was easy for the average design student to learn and use.

I find it amazing that in the UK there are anti monopoly laws to prevent the domination of commercial markets by individual companies, but

it would seem that these do not apply to multinational software companies. How is it that Adobe have ruthlessly acquired total dominance in design software, and now charge outrageous prices for the privilege of its use.

I still have a Mac with Freehand, on which I still do personal work for small charities and my community, but regret that while I have professional skills I can no longer afford the tools of my trade on my newest Mac.

Tom Cockeram

2014-12-07 20:51:50

NULL