

Dreamweaver 8 is an amazing program with many new, robust features and a lot to offer users on its own merits. But there is a bigger picture here. Dreamweaver 8 is available as a standalone program, or part of Macromedia's Studio 8, which is the premiere web development package on the market.

Studio 8 offers the web designer and/or developer the tools they need to get the entire job done. It begins with concept and document drawing in Fireworks 8. Fireworks 8 has a bonanza of new features including new graphic effects, new palettes and new production aids to get the job done quickly.

Then the workflow changes to Dreamweaver 8 and the now famous round tripping integration these two programs offer the user. What was already good has only gotten better. The integration is tighter; the option to directly edit a Fireworks image without leaving Dreamweaver works better; and html created in Fireworks in connection with graphic slicing, button production and popup menu creation imports right into Dreamweaver so the work flow can continue without missing a beat.

Fireworks and Dreamweaver have obviously set themselves up well to be the Dynamic Duo of web design. But it's not forgetting Big Brother Flash, particularly not this time around. Flash 8 is nothing short of earth shattering with its video support for alpha channels and its continued movement into the dynamic data driven arena. Read the DMX Zone E-Book on Flash 8 by Sas Jacobs to learn more.

Finally, there is Contribute for site maintenance, whose introduction into the Macromedia Studio makes the Studio the complete web design package, from concept to design to development to maintenance. If you have the entire Studio, you really don't need anything else.

## ***What's Different with This Studio***

The most obvious difference between the former Studio and Studio 8 is the content. Freehand is no longer a part of the Macromedia Studio, but that in no way means that Freehand is no longer an important product. It's just that, in an extensive survey of users, the majority felt that Freehand was more of a print oriented product, while the majority of web users designed their graphics with the more web suited Fireworks. These surveys indicated that the Studio needed to be directed more for the web user and the piece that was really missing was something for the maintenance of web sites after the design phase was over. The natural choice was to replace Freehand, in the Studio only, with Contribute. This made the Macromedia Studio 8 the complete design suite; from artistic design in Fireworks to document actualization in Dreamweaver with rich internet content and certain kinds of interface design being created in Flash, and finally maintenance of the completed web site in Contribute.

Also included in the Studio CD set is the developer edition of Cold Fusion 7, Macromedia's own server model, for the testing of Cold Fusion pages before live deployment to a production server, and HomeSite +, Macromedia's editor for the code-only-don't-give-me-design-view developer.

And there are two more pieces. Contribute comes with FlashPaper integrated into the product and allows for quick and easy PDF or Flash document creation. Flash comes with the Flash Video Encoder for easy, quality Flash Video creation, which can then be inserted into web pages with Dreamweaver.

If you are one of the users out there asking at this juncture, "Flash WHAT?" then please allow me to explain and to encourage you to give Flash Paper a try. Flash Paper is simply an add-on that will work as a standalone (just drop the document on top of the icon to start it up) or through the integrated menu it adds to popular programs like Microsoft Word. You have two options with Flash Paper. You can save the Word document as a PDF (wonderful for people like me who don't have the bucks to purchase Acrobat) or save the Word document as Flash Paper. Flash Paper plays in the plain ole Flash player already installed in your browser, but it loads the document in a split second. Remember that the Flash format is very small and portable so it stands to reason that any document associated with the Flash Paper would be small and very

portable. And since the Flash Player is already in 98.some browsers, you don't have to worry about downloading a plugin to see the document (unless you belong to the other 1 percent or less of the world's browsers). Very simple, very sweet and very free as part of the Macromedia Studio 8.

The other nice free include is the Flash Video Encoder provided on the Studio CD. It automatically installs if you install Flash 8 Professional, but you can also install the Video Encoder if that's all you need and you have no other need of Flash. I was ready to look right past this one, since I already own a working version of Sorenson Squeeze, but I have found some nice features and a friendly wizard like interface meant for the ::ahem:: non-professional videographer .. that would be me. When you get your Studio 8, please have a look at this lil baby .. it's a very nice little tool for quickly encoding a piece of video into the Flash Video format.

## *What do I need to use this Studio?*

There are some other changes that are important to discuss in this version of the Macromedia Studio also. The system requirements have changed because, as programs mature and allow for more advanced features and take advantage of more advanced technology, some of the things of the past have to, of necessity, drop off. Unfortunately, it's just not possible to do everything with one tool and do it well. This version is no exception and, in order to raise the bar, the lower end had to disappear. Therefore, Macromedia Studio 8 no longer supports Windows 98. Your Windows Operating System must be either Win 2000 or XP (or 2003) and have a **600 MHz Intel Pentium III processor or equivalent**. The RAM recommendation has also been raised to require 256 kb with 1 gb recommended if more than one Studio product is to be run simultaneously, but before that scares you to death, let me tell you that I have no problem whatsoever with my machine that only has 512 mb. I can run both Fireworks and Dreamweaver at the same time with no noticeable difference, but I shut one of them down if I need Flash for my application. Anything less than that is going to create slowdown, however, and possible non-response because the system just can't keep up. The price we pay for getting more!

The MacIntosh requirement is **500 MHz PowerPC G3 processor with an operating system of Mac OS X 10.2.6 or later**.

## *Why Upgrade?*

I have to talk about this because every time a new Macromedia Studio comes out, the forums are full of this type question. "I'm doing fine with the old one . . . why would I want this one?" I don't suppose "because I said so" is going to fly, so here are some of the reasons you have to upgrade:

1. The Site Stuff .. File Compare, Synchronize, Accessibility, Background FTP (circle that one!)
2. Unified CSS .. do it for this one alone. You will and I mean WILL throw away your 3<sup>rd</sup> party CSS tool once you spend a few days with this one. It's so fast and the CSS rendering is so much better than the old version.
3. XML Integration. I couldn't WAIT to get my hands on this .. and I wasn't disappointed. You may THINK you have no reason to work with data in the XML format, but you will be astounded at the number of applications you can think of once you get started. It's so portable and easy to use as opposed to lumbering around with a database strapped to your ankle. DO it .. and you won't look back.

**NOTE:** I am in no way suggesting here that databases are a thing of the past. Databases are wonderful tools, but XML solves a lot of problems for a little data, data inside Flash, etc.

4. PHP5. this is a big draw if you use it already .. and there are a lot of reasons to use it, as long as you have a host that agreed with you that "cutting edge was best". I just love it when my tools support the new technology and Dreamweaver 8 supports this one well.
5. Code Collapse. I am not sure how long we have waited for this one, but it was worth it. You can collapse by tag, by section, inside a tag, outside a tag; you can just collapse your heart out until you .. well .. collapse! Well done, Macromedia! The coder in me thanks you from the bottom of my heart!
6. Coding Toolbar. This is just a very nice touch right along the left side of Code view. Quick one-click icons to coding functionality we need every day put right there in front of us. A fine solution to "My insert bar only works in Design View!"
7. Accessibility made Accessible. Some very nice accessibility features in this one. While I don't personally develop a lot for the target audience on this one, I wholeheartedly applaud the need to make content available to anyone who wants to read it, including those challenged a little extra. Thank you, Dreamweaver Team!
8. Customization got more customizable. Edit/Preferences is bigger. You can do more things "your way" and who doesn't like that? This in and of itself is one of the biggest reasons to choose Dreamweaver over the others guys. I used Notepad for a lot of years because I couldn't find a tool that would let me work the way I wanted and needed to work and I found it in Dreamweaver .. 3, I think. Since then it's only gotten better and more personal and Dreamweaver 8 is carrying on the tradition well.
9. Cold Fusion without having to jump over to the Administrator every time you turn around. Man, that is really worth something! The site setup and data connection tasks are all integrated right into the DW interface. I did not, I SWEAR, use the Cold Fusion Administrator even once in preparing the chapter for this book on Cold Fusion. I would have never thought it possible!
10. Fireworks – blend modes, reworked popup menus that WORK, new panels that let you go hog wild, new brushes .. vector graphics does NOT get any better than Fireworks!
11. Flash – I wouldn't know where to start .. read the DMX Zone book on Flash 8! Seriously, the alpha channels in Flash video have literally given us the opportunity to produce what previously you had to have a TV editing bay for about \$35,000 to even come close. That's my favorite thing about Flash Professional 8 . I'll let the DMX Zone book on Flash to the rest for you!

Is that enough? By the time you read this, the trial download will be available .. please run .. don't walk .. to the Macromedia site to see for yourself. I promise you will not be disappointed.

It has been a pleasure to have been given the opportunity to present this guided tour of the new Dreamweaver 8 to you. It is my hope that I have leant a bit of insight into the features and plusses of the program as well as conveyed to all of you reading the series a bit of my enthusiasm for what I feel is the "best out there!" And, as often is the case, the best keeps getting better!

I hope everyone reading this series will upgrade (and no, I'm no longer an affiliate so it doesn't go into my pocket!) to Version 8 and see for yourself how a talented group of programmers at Macromedia take a vision and turn it into software. This is my third trip into the next generation and I still feel like the proverbial kid in the toy store with my eyes staring in amazement!

Thanks for reading! I can't wait to see what you develop with your copy of Macromedia Dreamweaver 8!