Ulead® GIF Animator™ 5

THE POWER TO ANIMATE

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Introducing Ulead GIF Animator

Ulead GIF Animator is a powerful GIF animation tool for creating high impact animation for Web pages, presentations, and multimedia titles. From composition, editing, and applying special effects, you can do them all in GIF Animator. GIF Animator also gives you total control over optimization, allowing you to make animations compact and Web-ready while retaining excellent image quality. And, when it is time to produce the final animation file, the program lets you output your animation in a variety of file formats, including animated GIF, Windows AVI, QuickTime, Autodesk animation, image sequences, and even Flash animation.

Just to give you an idea of how powerful GIF Animator is, here is an overview of some of its features. For more information about the program's new features, see the section "What's new" on .

Animation and Optimization Wizards

GIF Animator includes built-in wizards that take all the hard work out of building animations. If you are a novice user, you can easily compose an animation by running the **Animation Wizard**. This wizard walks you through the whole composition process in four quick and easy steps. After you are done editing your animation, use the **Optimization Wizard** to automatically make the output file as compact as possible for faster download times on the Internet.

Simple, easy-to-use interface

GIF Animator's integrated interface makes working with animations a breeze. Its **tab-style interface** lets you instantly switch between different working modes for you to edit, optimize, and preview your animation. The frames that make up your animation are clearly laid out in the **Frame Panel**, where you can add, remove, or reorganize the frames and customize playing options of individual frames. You can also easily manage the objects in the animation with the **Object Manager Panel**.

While editing your animation project, viewing the results of your work is a snap with **workspace previews** or instant **browser previews**.

Object-based editing

GIF Animator, while primarily a post-production tool, does give you the capability to **manipulate objects in True Color**. With the various tools in the **Tool Panel**, you can add text objects as well as perform minor touch-ups and edits on image objects. For more advanced editing, you can even send a frame's objects directly to your favorite image editor for further enhancement or to add special effects. If you use Ulead PhotoImpact to create new text or apply effects to your text, the text objects will still remain editable when you bring them (*.ufo file format) back into the GIF Animator workspace.

Animated banner text

GIF Animator lets you create dynamic and eye-catching banner text in motion. You can combine different effects, such as adding a neon glow and applying move-in and move-out effects. GIF Animator also provides text formatting, alignment and line spacing adjustment controls for banner text.

Plug-in filters and video effects

Photoshop 32-bit plug-ins can be added into GIF Animator and applied to image objects. Also, GIF Animator comes with many video filters and effects, allowing you to create impressive transitions from one frame to another and add impact to your animations.

Note: *GIF Animator 5 can open UFO files created in all Ulead PhotoImpact versions. Yet, UFO files saved in GIF Animator 5 can be opened again in GIF Animator 5 or Ulead PhotoImpact 6 only.*

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What's new

This version of GIF Animator offers significant improvements to the overall program interface and brings you a wide range of new features that give you increased flexibility when editing, optimizing, and outputting your animation projects. Moreover, the approach in creating an animation has been enhanced with greater efficiency.

Enhanced usability

- User-friendly interface that allows you to "dock" tool panels where you want them or transform them into floating panels.
- Workspace previews show convenient True Color preview in editing mode.

Use a selection with soft edge to create a semi-transparent effect in your GIF.

Object-based editing and composition

- Text, image, and banner text objects make animation composition and editing easier.
- **Transform Tool** now lets you resize and rotate objects.
- Improved **Selection Tools** add/subtract selections. They can also produce soft edges, anti-aliasing, loading selections, and inverting selections.
- New **Object Manager Panel** lists all the objects in an animation project. You can use it to show objects, hide objects, customize object properties, and set the object layer level.
- **Tweening** automates the process of animating objects. This new feature automatically generates intermediate positions for selected objects to simulate motion and fade-in/fade-out effects.

While using the Transform Tool, drag the control points to transform an object in the animation.

Cross-application integration

- From within GIF Animator, send objects to other image editors such as Ulead PhotoImpact 6, Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro for further editing.
- Photoshop layers and PhotoImpact objects can now be opened as individual objects in GIF Animator.

Improved text handling

- Text objects remain **editable** after entry.
- **Character-level formatting** enables use of different fonts, styles, character spacing, and more for individual characters within the text.

Tweening

- **Line spacing and baseline shift** adjust the spacing between multiple lines of text.
- **Gradient and texture fills** provide multiple color and pattern fills for text.
- Add **Neon** or **Split Text** to be able to edit the individual characters.
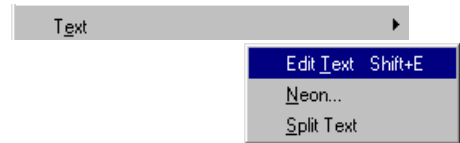
Improved banner text

- **Re-editable banner text** lets you modify banner text effects and settings.
- **Full typographic control** enables character-level formatting, line spacing, and more.
- **Combine effects** by adding a neon glow and applying move-in and move-out effects.
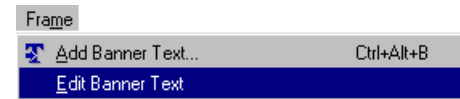
New video filters

- New **ColorReplace** and **ColorShift** video filters provide animated color effects.

Greater optimization control

- Improved optimizer engine reduces the file size even more!
- Side-by-side **before and after previews** show real-time optimized results and file sizes.
- **Dither** and **Lossy** adjustments give you more control over GIF compression.
- **Web snap** control increases the relative proximity of colors to the Web safe palette.
- **Palette Weight** reserves a larger number of palette entries for red, green or blue.
- **Color palette management** enables locking, sorting, and snapping of index colors.
- Compress by file size or compression ratio.

Left: True Color View   Right: Index Color View

Improved output options

- **Save objects** as layers in Ulead PhotoImpact 6 UFO and Photoshop PSD file formats.
- Export projects as **True Color Flash animations** in BMP or JPEG formats.
- **Save animations** as AVI videos, MPEG videos, or QuickTime movies **in True Color**.

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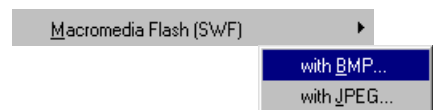
Getting started

It is easy to install GIF Animator. The Installation Wizard will guide you through the steps for completing the installation. Once you have GIF Animator up and running in your computer, start out by first customizing the program to best suit your needs.

Installation

To install GIF Animator:

1   Place the GIF Animator CD into your CD-ROM drive.
2   When the setup screen appears, follow the instructions to install GIF Animator onto your computer.

Note: *If the setup screen doesn't appear automatically, click the Start button on your Windows task bar and then click the Run command. When the Run dialog box opens, enter **D:\setup.exe** and click **OK** (where **D** is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).*

Once you've installed GIF Animator, take a moment to register online. Just point your Web browser to the Ulead Web site (http://www.ulead.com). Becoming a registered user entitles you to product and information updates, as well as technical support if you encounter any problems with the GIF Animator program.

Running the program

To run the GIF Animator program:

•   Double-click the **GIF Animator** icon on your Windows desktop.

OR

•   Select the **GIF Animator** icon from the Ulead GIF Animator program group on the Windows Start menu.

Note: *To learn more about GIF Animator, you can access the program's online help. Simply press **[F1]** to open it. You can also visit the Ulead Web site for tutorials by selecting **Help: Online Tutorials**.*

Customizing how you work

Before you start creating your animation projects, select **File: Preferences [F6]** to customize GIF Animator and specify how you want to work with your animations. For instance, you can define a standard delay time for displaying frames in your animation, choose the Web browser to use when previewing your work, set up the number of undo levels, and more. Click the tabs in the Preferences dialog box to select the desired options.

Here are some tips on what options to use when working with animations. For information on all the available options, click **Help** in the different tabs of the Preferences dialog box.

To set the desired undo/redo levels:

• Click the **General** tab. Setting a high value for the **Levels of undo** allows you to perform as many actions as you want, yet still be able to change your mind and remove or reapply some of those actions to come up with desirable results for your animation.

Note: *The maximum number of undo/redo levels is "50."*
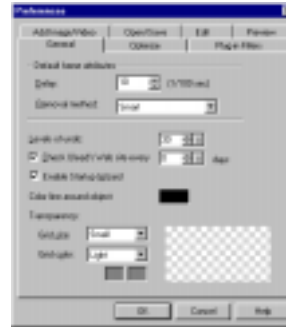
Preferences dialog box - General tab

To define standard playback settings for animations:

• In the **General** tab, set a standard display time for each frame by entering a time **Delay**. This determines the speed of your animation. Also, from the **Removal method** list, select a method for removing frames before displaying the succeeding frames.

Note: *Setting a **Delay** value of "100" displays each frame for one second.*

To show or hide popup messages:

• In the **Add Image/Video**, **Open/Save**, and **Edit** tabs, select what messages or option selections you want GIF Animator to display before performing certain file operations or object manipulation.
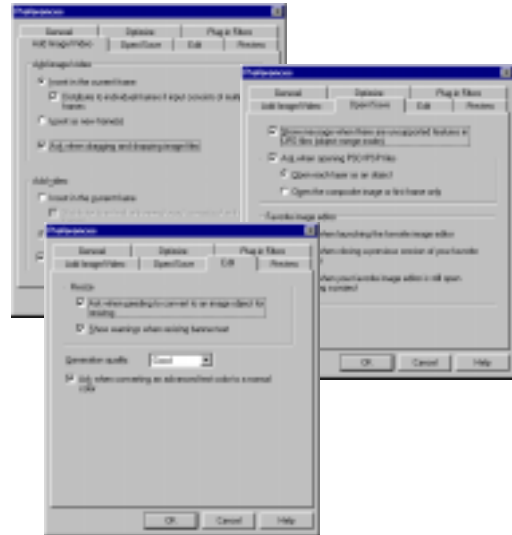
Preferences dialog box - Add Image/Video, Open/Save, and Edit tabs

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To use plug-in filters:

- In the **Plug-in Filters** tab, select a check box. Next, click **Browse** to link GIF Animator to the plug-in folders of other programs (such as Ulead GIF-X.Plugin or Adobe Photoshop), and access that program's plug-in filters. Then, you can apply the plug-in filters to your animation project from within GIF Animator.

Note: *For more information on how to load plug-in filters and apply them to animation projects, see the section, "Using Plug-in filters" on* **page 38***.*

Preferences dialog box - Plug-in Filters tab

To select the Web browser(s) to use for previewing:

- In the **Preview** tab, make sure that the **Auto-detect Internet Explorer/ Netscape Navigator** option is selected if you want GIF Animator to automatically locate and use any of these Web browsers when you preview your animations.

Note: *To use another Web browser of your choice, click the browse button under the **Other browsers** option to locate the desired browser.*
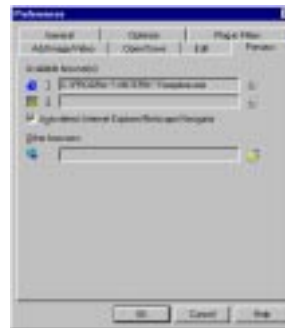
Preferences dialog box - Preview tab

To set a default optimization preset:

- In the **Optimize** tab, select a preset from the **Optimize preset manager** list which you think you will most likely use when optimizing your animated GIFs. Then, click **Set selection as default** to make it as the default preset everytime you move to the Optimize mode.

Preferences dialog box - Optimize tab

Notes:
- *The default optimization preset is Photo 256.*
- *For more information on optimization, see the section, "Optimizing your animation" on* **page 41***.*

GIF Animator at a glance

Everything you need to build great animations is included in GIF Animator's single, WYSIWYG interface. With its drag-and-drop capabilities and the power to import files from more than 30 different file formats, the sky is the limit to what GIF Animator can help you create.

Introducing the interface

At the heart of the GIF Animator interface is the workspace where you create and edit your animation. In the workspace, there are three mode tabs which allow you to switch between different working modes to complete your animation. The available toolbars and panels change as you click each mode tab.

When you run GIF Animator, the program starts in editing mode where you can begin composing your animation. The illustration below provides an overview of the GIF Animator interface in editing mode. The next few pages give more details about the interface in each of the three modes.

Mode tabs
Allows you to switch between the three working modes.

Standard Toolbar
Provides the most commonly used functions and commands in the form of single-click buttons.

Object Manager Panel
Lists all the objects used in the animation.

Attribute Toolbar
Provides a set of options and controls for specific tools.

Tool Panel
Contains various tools for editing objects.

Frame Panel
Lays out the animation frame by frame.

Workspace
This is where you compose and edit your animation frame-by-frame.

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Working modes in GIF Animator

In GIF Animator, going through three different working modes - **Edit**, **Optimize**, and **Preview** - is essential to complete an animation. While creating an animation, click to switch between these three tabs in the workspace as needed.

Each working mode provides you with a different set of tools to work on. The following sections describe how you can accomplish a GIF animation in different modes and introduce the tools available in each mode.

Edit mode

The **Edit** mode is the default working mode for GIF Animator. In this mode, the workspace provides a work area where you can compose and edit your animation.

In Edit mode, you can start by first planning out the number of frames or 'scenes' needed for the animation. This can be accomplished by using the **Frame Panel**. In the course of developing your animation, use the Frame Panel to add, remove, and arrange frames as well as set playback options.

You can then add objects. Think of objects as the 'casts' that participate in your animation. When you add them to your animation, they will be enlisted in the **Object Manager Panel**. The Object Manager Panel keeps a record of all your objects. Most importantly, you use the Object Manager Panel to specify which objects will (or will not) appear on each frame in the animation.

Objects, be it text or image objects, can be edited and manipulated. The **Tool Panel** provides tools for editing objects. When you select an editing tool, the corresponding controls and options used with the tool appears in the **Attribute Toolbar**.

Note: *To learn more about the Frame Panel, refer to the section, "Working with frames" on* **page 33***.*

Frame Panel

Floating panels
By default, these panels are docked in a location within the program. Double-clicking the pinpointed area creates a floating panel (with a title bar) that can be moved anywhere of your choice. Double-clicking the title bar returns to the default docked location.
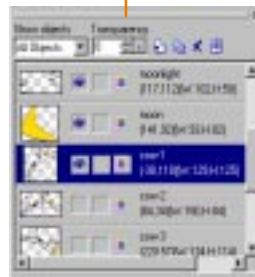
Object Manager Panel

Tool Panel

Attribute Toolbar

Optimize mode

Optimize mode is where you can work on compressing and compacting your animations before saving them as animated GIF files. Optimize your animations to come up with good quality images yet with smaller file sizes for fast transmission on the Web.

In Optimize mode, the workspace displays side-by-side before and after previews. It shows you the resulting file size after optimization and estimates the required download time for your animation.

Before and after previews in the Optimize mode

To optimize your animation, first, specify the number of colors you want to be available in the animation. GIF Animator simplifies this task by providing you with a list of color palette presets in the **Attribute Toolbar** which you can directly select and use. The optimization settings associated with a selected preset can be further adjusted through the various controls and options in the Attribute Toolbar. You can also click the **Optimization Wizard** button for step-by-step guidance on customizing your settings.

Attribute Toolbar

For advanced optimization, use the **Optimize Panel** to customize more settings and specify whether to use a single global palette or apply unique local palette(s) to certain parts of your animation. Use the **Color Palette** to view and edit colors in the global or local palette.

Optimize Panel

Color Palette

Tip: *The **Optimize Panel** and **Color Palette** can be shown or hidden from the **View** menu.*

Notes:
- *To display a "Web preview" in GIF Animator, you need to have Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher installed in your computer. Otherwise, the Preview tab will not be available.*
- *To preview animations directly in a Web browser, click a browser button on the Standard toolbar. Customize these buttons by selecting **File: Preferences - Preview**.*

Preview mode

While working on your animation, click the **Preview** mode tab from time to time to view the progress and results of your work. This mode shows you a preview of your animation within GIF Animator as it will appear when displayed on your Web browser.

For current GIF Animator users

While much of this program may already be familiar to users of GIF Animator, many of the menu commands and functions in this version have been changed in context and further enhanced. The table below is provided to assist users to easily migrate from previous versions to Ulead GIF Animator 5.

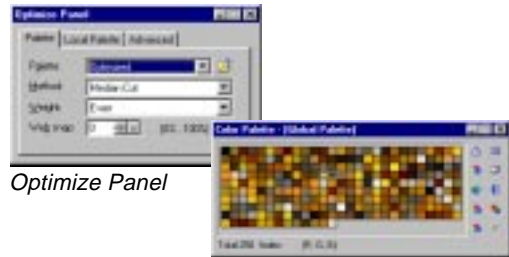| In previous versions	In Ulead GIF Animator 5
Saves only in **animated GIF** file format.	Saves in a **native file format (*.uga)** that retains frame and object information and provides more output options.
Uses the concept of **image layers** to create animations. The **Layer pane** organizes the layers in an animation.	Uses the concept of **frames** and **objects** to create animations. The **Frame Panel** lays out the frames contained in an animation. The **Object Manager Panel** displays objects and lets you set object properties.
Layer: Moving Sprites creates motion effects by automatically generating a series of layers and adjusting their positions.	**Frame: Tween** creates motion and fading effects through varying object positions and applying different transparency levels in the generated animation sequence.
Layer: Moving Animations combines two different animation files, effectively putting an animation within an animation.	**Object: Distribute to Frames** takes selected objects in a frame and spreads them out to the succeeding frames. When you drag an animation or video file from another program into GIF Animator 5, the program provides options to determine how to insert these frames into the current workspace.
Makes areas in an image layer transparent by setting a color as the **transparent index**.	In an object, it's easy to make a selected area transparent with the **Eraser Tool** or by simply deleting the selection.
Edit: Global Attribute Change makes image layer attributes all the same.	**Frame: Synchronize Objects Across Frames** is useful when you select object(s) in an animation, and want its attributes to be the same throughout all or selected frames.

Tutorial

When you create an animation, it is important to plan beforehand the sequence of 'scenes' before you actually start composing the contents of the animation. Also, make sure that you can get avail of all the objects that you need, or that you are capable of creating them.

This short tutorial walks you through the steps on how to create an animation from start to finish. In each step, references to more detailed sections are provided in the manual. Refer to the referenced pages for information about each stage in the animation production process.

To create an animation:

1 Select **File: New** and set a canvas size to create a new project.
(For information on the different ways of creating a new project, see *page 16*. See *page 18* on how to set the canvas size.)

2 Add some frames in the **Frame Panel**. (See *page 33* for details.)

3 Insert some objects. You can add image files as objects in your project as well as create simple text and banner text.
(For details on text and image objects, see *page 20*. See *page 36* on how to create banner text.)

4 For each frame, choose which objects should appear by showing or hiding them using the **Object Manager Panel**.
(See *page 21* for more information.)

5 While the frame(s) is selected, click **Frame: Frame Properties** to set the **Frame delay**. This specifies how long you want each frame to be displayed.
(See *page 33* for details.)

6 Click the Optimize tab to optimize the animation.
(See *page 41* for details on optimization.)

7 Select **File: Save** to save your work (as a *.uga file). You can also save it as an animated GIF, Flash, and many more.
(See *page 47* for more information on saving and exporting animations.)

Adding blank frames

Creating and adding objects

Setting frame properties

Creating an animation project

An animation is composed of 'frames' which are displayed sequentially to give the appearance of motion. GIF Animator lets you build your animation frame by frame. In each frame, you can add images and other types of objects (such as banner text), as well as insert portions of digitized videos. You can also insert the contents of an entire folder or a range of selected files by the drag-and-drop operation.

Introducing the UGA project file

When you create a new animation, GIF Animator opens a new project in the workspace. The project uses a special file format, *.uga, which is exclusive to GIF Animator. In this type of file, you can compose an animation by adding text, images, and banner text. GIF Animator saves them as objects in the project. The next time you open your project file, you will still be able to edit the objects individually.

Creating a new project

There are several ways to create an animation project, and these are clearly listed in the **Startup Wizard** that pops up when you run GIF Animator. Choose the desired method by clicking its corresponding button.

Here is a brief overview of the different methods in the Startup Wizard. Alternatively, they can also be accessed through menu commands in GIF Animator, which are also indicated below.

- **Animation Wizard** - Guides you through the process of creating an animation, step by step. (**File: Animation Wizard**)
- **Blank animation** - Opens a new project based on your selected canvas size and color. (**File: New [Ctrl + N]**)
- **Open an existing image file** - Opens an image file and adds it as an object to the new project. (**File: Open Image [Ctrl + O]**)
- **Open an existing video file** - Opens a video or animation file and adds all its frames to the new project. (**File: Open Video**)
- **Online Tutorial** - Links you to the GIF Animator tutorial section in Ulead's Web site.

Startup Wizard

Note: *When you use the Animation Wizard or open an image/video file, GIF Animator creates the new project with a transparent background. When you start out with a blank animation, you can select a canvas size and color. The color will be added as an independent object in the new project.*

Using the Animation Wizard

The Animation Wizard provides a quick and easy way to create an animation project. It guides you step by step through the process of setting a canvas size, adding images (or video), up to customizing playback options for your animation. Use the buttons found at the bottom of the Animation Wizard window to move forward or backward through the steps.

To use the Animation Wizard:

1   In the **Startup Wizard**, click **Animation Wizard**. (Or, select **File: Animation Wizard**.)

2   Select a preset canvas **Size**, or if you want to specify your own size, enter the desired **Width** and **Height** for the canvas.
    (See the section, "Setting the canvas size" on *page 18* for more information).

3   Click **Add Image** to select one or more image files to add them as objects to the new project. If you want your project to start with video, click **Add Video** to select a video file.

4   Specify a default playback speed for each frame in your animation by entering the desired **Delay time**. This is measured in 1/100th of a second. If you want each frame to be displayed for one second, for instance, enter 100 as your Delay time.

    Another way of specifying playback speed is by entering the desired **Frame rate** (number of frames to display per second). When you specify a value for either setting, the other one is automatically adjusted.

5   Click **Finish**. A new project then opens in the workspace, with image objects or frames added against a transparent background.

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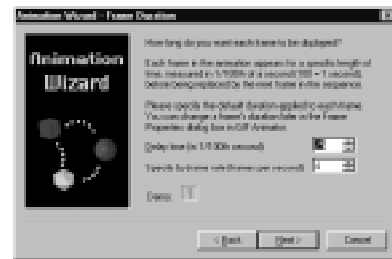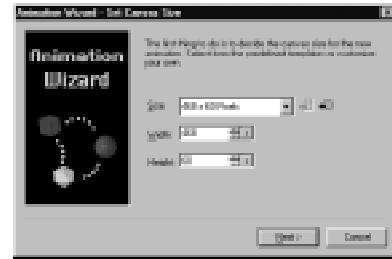
Starting out with an image, animation or video file

GIF Animator supports a wide range of image, animation, and video file types which you can directly open in the program. When you open a media file, a new project will be created and the file contents will be added to the project. The canvas size will be based upon the original dimensions used by the media file.

To open an image file as an object in a new project, select **File: Open Image [Ctrl + O]**. If you want your new project to start out with frames or 'scenes' from an existing animation or video file, select **File: Open Video**.

> **Tip:** *Dragging a single image, animation, or video file from Windows Explorer and dropping it into GIF Animator's title bar also opens the file as a new project.*

Before opening multi-layered image files such as Photoshop (*.PSD) and Paint Shop Pro (*.PSP) files in GIF Animator, first select **File: Preferences** and click the **Open/Save** tab to specify how you want these files to be opened. You can choose to always **Open each layer as an object**, or select the **Open the composite image or first frame only** option to merge all the layers as a single object. If you want GIF Animator to prompt you with these options before actually opening the file, also select the **Ask when opening PSD/PSP files** option.

Preferences dialog box - Open/Save tab

Setting the canvas size

The canvas size determines the dimensions of the animation frames as they would appear when played back on-screen. When you create a new project using the Animation Wizard or by selecting **File: New**, you can select a canvas size from the available presets, or if you prefer to specify your own dimensions, you can enter the desired **Width** and **Height**. Click the **Add a Preset** button if you want to include your custom canvas size to the list of presets.
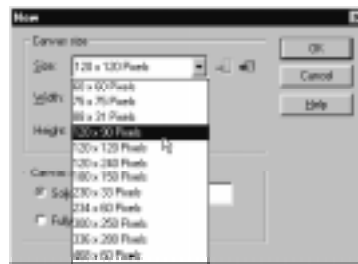
Canvas Size presets in the New dialog box

Since animated GIFs are widely used in creating banner ads for Web pages, GIF Animator tries to provide you with preset canvas sizes that are ideal for use in banner ads. Ready-to-use canvas sizes that can be selected from GIF Animator's presets include the following:

Canvas Size (in pixels)	Banner type	Canvas Size (in pixels)	Banner type
60 x 60	Button	180 x 150	Rectangle
75 x 75	Button	230 x 33	Small
88 x 31	Button	234 x 60	Half
120 x 90	Button	300 x 250	Medium Rectangle
120 x 120	Square Button	336 x 280	Large Rectangle
120 x 240	Vertical	468 x 60	Full

After you have set the canvas size and started working on your project, you are still free to modify the dimensions anytime you feel that the available space is not enough for composing your animation. Minimizing the canvas size also helps in reducing the file size of your animation.

To change the canvas size, use the following commands in the **Edit** menu:

- **Canvas Size** - Resizes the underlying canvas only. All the objects that have been added to the project remain unchanged.
- **Resize Image** - Resizes the canvas size and objects simultaneously. This command is especially useful when you want to resize the objects in the project proportionately with the canvas size.
- **Crop Canvas** - Trims the canvas to remove extra spaces or unwanted areas. When objects are selected, the boundary of the outermost objects are used as the basis for cropping. If you made selections on certain objects, areas outside the selections will be trimmed off.

Original

After applying Canvas Size command

After applying Resize Image command

Cropping canvas based on objects

Cropping canvas based on selections

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Working with objects

Since objects are the core of each animation frame, knowing how to create and control them is crucial for a successful animation.

Adding image objects

Once you have planned how your animation would be (such as size and object types), the next step is to insert objects into each frame of your animation project. Image objects can be added to your animation project by one of the following methods:

- Select **File: Add Image** - Inserts image objects from image files. The image file can be a still image, an animated GIF, an animation project (*.uga), a Photoshop (*.psd) file, a Paint Shop Pro (*.psp) file, or even a (*.ufo) file created in GIF Animator or PhotoImpact.
- Select **File: Add Video** - Inserts image objects from a video file in various formats such as AVI and MPEG.
- Directly drag image files or a video file from Windows Explorer to GIF Animator workspace.
- Copy and paste - You can create an image object from an image editor such as Ulead PhotoImpact or Adobe Photoshop first. Then simply copy **[Ctrl+C]** it to the clipboard and paste **[Ctrl+V]** it into the frame you want in GIF Animator.
- Convert selection to object - You can create a selection area directly on an existing image object in GIF Animator. Then simply copy **[Ctrl+C]** and paste **[Ctrl+V]** to create an object. The copied selection area is now shown as an object in the current frame, and acts as a hidden object in all other frames.

To add image objects from image files:

1 Select the frame where you want to add image objects in the Frame Panel. (For details on Frame Panel, see *page 33*.)

2 Select **File: Add Image**, or click the **Add Image** button.

3 Select the image file(s) you want, and then choose an option:
  - **Insert in the current frame** - Adds the image objects starting in the active frame.
  - **Insert as new frame(s)** - Adds image objects starting the first frame after the active one.

4 Click **Open**.

A selected frame in the Frame Panel
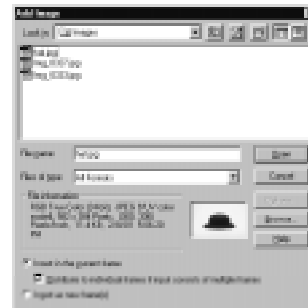
Add Image dialog box

To add image objects from a video file:

1   Select the frame where you want to add image objects in the Frame Panel. (For details on Frame Panel, see *page 33.)*

2   Select **File: Add Video**, or click the **Add Video** button.

3   Select the video file you want, and then click **Open**.

Add Video dialog box

Note: *Unlike image files, only one video file can be inserted at a time. For details on insertion options, see **page 18**.*

Tip: *Using a short video is recommended. This is because a video file usually comes with many frames, which can increase the animation file size tremendously.*
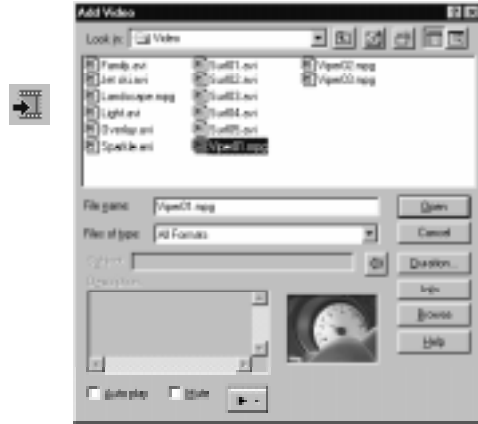
Object Manager Panel

Object Manager Panel displays all the objects in your animation project as individual thumbnails. Each thumbnail reflects the latest editing that you applied to its associated object. Every thumbnail is also numbered sequentially by the order in which it was created. (The newest created one is listed on the top.)

•   Click an object in the Object Manager Panel to select that object in the workspace. This is particularly useful if the object is small, overlapped or hidden behind other objects.

•   Double-click an object to view or edit its properties such as name, position, and size.

•   Just like other standard Windows program, the Object Manager Panel allows you to use **[Shift]** and **[Ctrl]** for multiple object selection. The same behavior can also be applied to the workspace.

•   To change the order of each object's layer, drag the thumbnail(s) directly from within the Object Manager Panel.

•   The same object can have different attributes when it appears in different frames in the animation. Adjust the attributes using the commands available in the Object Manager Panel.

The next page depicts major features of the Object Manager Panel.

Transparency slider
Click this button and then drag the slider
for a quick transparency setting.

Insert a blank object
Creates a new object based on the canvas size. You can
use it as a background color or other imaging purposes.

Duplicate selected objects
Make an exact copy of the selected objects.

Transparency
Enter a higher value to increase
the degree of transparency and
vice versa.

Delete active object(s)
Removes selected objects.

Show objects
Displays all/visible objects in
the Object Manager Panel.

Object Manager Commands
Click this button to display a
popup menu for advanced
commands.

Object's name
Displays the name of an object.

Object's thumbnail
Displays the associated
thumbnail of an object.

Object's position and size
Displays the location ([0,0] at
the upper left corner) and the
dimensions of an object.

Object's type
Displays the type of object such as an image
or text object. See ToolTips for details.

Show/Hide
Toggles between the two
modes to decide whether to
display an object in the
selected frame.

Lock/Unlock
Toggles between the two modes to decide
whether to refrain from object moving.

In the workspace, objects can be stacked in different layer positions. To change the stacking order, simply drag selected object(s) in the Object Manager Panel and then drop them in a desired position.

In addition, right-clicking a selected object in the workspace or the Object Manager Panel displays a menu where you can quickly choose from a number of object-related commands. (Some commands will be described in later sections.)

Right-click menu

Manipulating objects using the Tool Panel

Tool Panel provides a series of tools for editing and viewing objects in your animation project. The following sections describe each tool in detail.

Pick Tool	Selection Tool - Rectangle
Text Tool	Selection Tool - Ellipse
Paintbrush Tool	Selection Tool - Magic Wand
Eraser Tool	Selection Tool - Lasso
Fill Tool	Transform Tool
Eyedropper Tool	Actual View
Zoom In	Zoom Out
Background Color	
Swap Color	Foreground Color
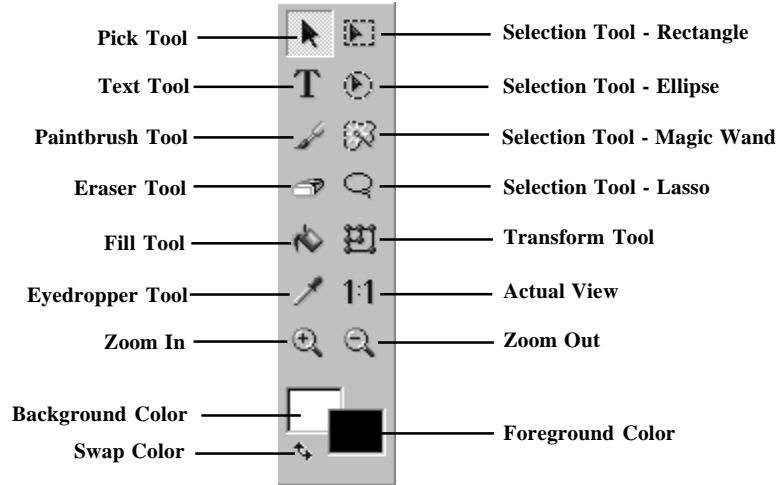
> **Note:** *Most tools are disabled in the Optimize and Preview modes.*

Pick Tool

Pick Tool selects or moves objects in the workspace. Select the object(s) first before starting your modifications.

- To select an object, click it directly in the workspace.
- To select multiple objects, use **[Shift]** or **[Ctrl]** with the mouse click.
- After objects are selected, drag to move them to the desired position.
- Double-click an object to view or edit its properties.
- Use the Attribute Toolbar for other options to organize objects. See ToolTips for specific functions.
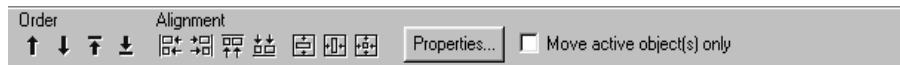
Attribute Toolbar - Pick Tool

> **Tip:** *When many objects overlap in the workspace, select the **Move active object(s) only** option to easily move the currently selected object without unintentionally selecting or moving others.*

Notes:
- *In the Object Manager Panel, you can also directly click there to select objects.*
- *As you select objects, the Object Manager Panel highlights the active objects in blue accordingly so you can also directly work on these objects in the Object Manager Panel.*
- *To help you easily identify the currently selected object(s), the mouse cursor becomes black as you move the mouse over the selected object(s).*
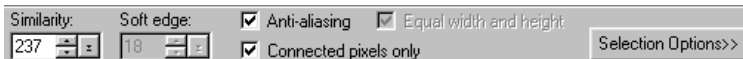
Selection Tools

Selection Tools create a selection of any shape directly on an object using the Rectangle, Ellipse, Magic Wand, and Lasso Tools. Once a selection is created, you can then edit it with other tools such as Fill or Paintbrush Tools, or use copy **[Ctrl+C]** and paste **[Ctrl+V]** to create an object right away.

Notes:
- *Before creating a selection on an object, select the object first.*
- *Colors can be applied within the selection area only.*
- *You can create a selection outside the boundary of an object. If you apply a color to the selection, the selection area will be merged with the selected object to form a single object.*

All four Selection Tools, though producing different shapes, share the same Attribute Toolbar. Use these options to best suit your needs when creating a selection. Clicking the **Selection Options** button also displays a popup menu where you can have more control of a selection.

Attribute Toolbar - Selection Tools

Tip: *Clicking the **Selection Options** button and choosing **None** clears the existing selection, without affecting the effect (such as applying colors) you previously applied on the selection area.*
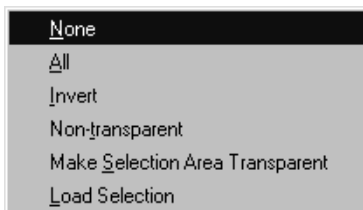
Menu appears after clicking the Selection Options button

Tips:
- *Frequently, you will want to make some of the GIF image transparent. To do so, simply create a selection area first. Then, select:* **Edit: Make Selection Area Transparent [Del]** *(or click the* **Selection Options** *button and then select* **Make Selection Area Transparent**.
- *Making a selection area is usually for creating special effects (such as adding colors as detailed on* **page 27**) *on an existing object. However, you might experience difficulty when modifying it later because all effects will be merged with the original object. To reduce this hassle, create these effects on a separate object first. For example, select* **Object: New Blank Object** *or click the associated button in the Object Manager Panel.*

If you need to expand an active selection area, select one of the four Selection Tools. Next, click any point on the selection border, and then move the pointer (with a "+" sign) to add selection while holding **[Shift]**. Similarly, to remove some of the selection, move the pointer (with a "-" sign) to delete selection while holding **[Alt]**.

Moreover, creating a selection on a transparent canvas is allowed. In doing so, you can crop the canvas based on the selection size when selecting **Edit: Crop Canvas**.

Transform Tool

Transform Tool can resize or rotate an object in the workspace. Use the options on the Attribute Toolbar to decide the kind of transformation to use.
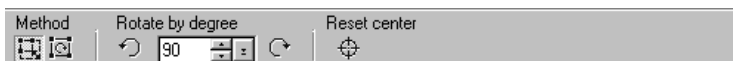
Attribute Toolbar - Transform Tool

To transform an object:

1 Select an object, and then click **Transform Tool** in the Tool Panel.
2 Select a method on the Attribute Toolbar:
   - The first method resizes the object. Drag any of the eight control points for transformation.
   - The second method rotates the object. For rotation, drag one of the four control points, or use the rotation buttons/angle value. You can also drag to change the position of the rotation center. Then start rotation again based on the new rotation center.

An example of transformation

Zoom Tools

While editing your animation, you may want to see it in greater detail or at a smaller size. These tools include Zoom In, Zoom Out, and Actual View Tools.

Notes:
- *Zoom tools are always enabled for convenient editing, no matter which tool you're currently using.*
- *Zoom ratio is displayed at the top of the screen.*
- *In addition to Tool Panel, on the keyboard press **[+]** for zoom-in, or **[-]** for zoom-out.*

Text Tool

Text is an inherently straightforward tool for delivering your message in the animation you create. In GIF Animator, creating text objects is easy. You can even further customize the text object in Ulead PhotoImpact (6) for more advanced effects.

Attribute Toolbar - Text Tool

To create a text object:

1 Click **Text Tool** in the Tool Panel.
2 Click a point in the workspace where you want to place the text object.
3 Type the text in the text entry box, and use the options as needed:
   - **Font**, **Size**, **Style**, **Baseline shift**, **Character spacing** and **Kerning** - can be applied to individual words or letters in the text.
   - **Color**, **Alignment**, **Line spacing**, **Anti-aliasing** and **Vertical** - are always applied to the whole text.
4 While editing, use the **Preview** button to see how the text would appear. When you're done, click **OK**.
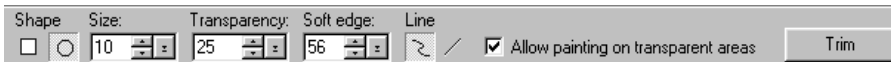

Text Entry Box dialog box

Note: *To edit the text later, double-click the text object in the workspace or in the Object Manager Panel then choose from the menu that appears. While the Text Tool is selected, you can also use the Attribute Toolbar for text options.*

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Tips:
- *A fast way of editing the text object in Ulead PhotoImpact 6 is to select **Edit: Favorite Image Editor - Ulead PhotoImpact 6**. See **page 30** for details.*
- *Saving the animation project as a UFO file is also recommended. So, you can create more versatile text effects in Ulead PhotoImpact (6) later. Once you're done, save it as a UFO file again. Then, open the UFO file in GIF Animator to continue your animation work.*

Paintbrush Tool

Paintbrush Tool lets you draw on a selected object. Use this feature with options on the Attribute Toolbar to freely expand the creativity in your animation.

Shape	Size:	Transparency:	Soft edge:	Line			
□ ○	10	25	56	∿ /	☑ Allow painting on transparent areas		Trim

Attribute Toolbar - Paintbrush Tool

To add colors in an object:

1. Select an object, and then click **Paintbrush Tool** in the Tool Panel.
2. On the Attribute Toolbar, select a stroke shape, and customize other stroke options as need.
3. The color you paint is based on the foreground color (details on *page 29*) in the Tool Panel. To choose another color, click the **Foreground Color**.
4. Start drawing. If you draw outside the border of the original object, the object will be expanded automatically.

Foreground Color

Tips:
- *It is strongly recommended that you draw on a new blank object. See **page 24** for details.*
- *To use the paintbrush in a transparent area, select the **Allow painting on transparent areas** option.*

Eraser Tool

Eraser Tool allows you to directly remove parts (colors) of an image object. You can also decide the degree of transparency in the erased area, making an interesting overlapping effects (especially when there are other objects in the workspace).

Like Paintbrush Tool, Eraser Tool has similar Attribute Toolbar. So, you can apply the same painting technique to erasing colors. Once you're done, trim the object again to optimize its size.
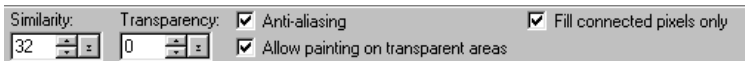
Attribute Toolbar - Eraser Tool

Fill Tool

Fill Tool changes colors by making part of or the whole object filled with the foreground color. It's another way to create a special effect such as creating a background color behind an object.

Attribute Toolbar - Fill Tool

To use the Fill Tool:

1   Select an image object. If you want to fill a color to part of the object only, create a selection area.
2   Click **Fill Tool** in the Tool Panel.
3   Customize the options on the Attribute Toolbar. For example, higher similarity value fills more area.
4   If you want to change the foreground color, click **Foreground Color** in the Tool Panel.
5   Move the mouse over the area you chose in step 1 and click to start filling. You might need to click continuously to achieve the desired effect.

Before (original)

After

An example of using the Fill Tool
The original bat image object has a white background. Then, The new color fills the area using the options depicted in the above Attribute Toolbar.

Tip: *To use the Fill Tool in a transparent area, select the **Allow painting on transparent areas** option on the Attribute toolbar.*

Eyedropper Tool

Eyedropper Tool lets you precisely select a foreground or background color in the workspace. So, later you can use the color in Paintbrush or Fill Tool.

To select a color with the eyedropper:

1 Click **Eyedropper Tool** in the Tool Panel
2 Move the mouse over the spot containing the color you want and click it to select a new foreground color. Instead, right-clicking it selects a new background color.
3 The color you selected is displayed in the Tool Panel immediately.

Note: *As you move the mouse, the RGB and HSB values of the current color are displayed on the Attribute Toolbar accordingly.*

Tip: *Use Zoom Tools as needed to easily find a particular color.*

R	G	B	H	S	B	Mask
255	80	132	342	69	100	255

*Attribute Toolbar - Eyedropper Tool*
(Example of color values)

Foreground/Background Color

GIF Animator provides two color options: foreground color and background color. The foreground color is the one utilized when the Paintbrush and Fill Tools are being used in the project. The color of text objects are determined on the Text Attribute toolbar. The background color, meanwhile, is used for many different functions. The background color is important especially if objects in the animation have transparencies applied to them. The background color is one of the colors that can be used as the matte color of the transparent area. Also, the background color can fill the transparent area of the animation that some filters (see *page 38*) or video effects (see *page 39*) do not support. Lastly, when pasting transparent objects copied from GIF Animator into an image editor (e.g. Ulead PhotoImpact 6), the transparent areas of the object will be filled using the background color.

Tip: *To quickly exchange the color between the foreground color box and the background one, click the **Swap Color** button (a two-arrow icon under the **Background Color** square in the Tool Panel).*

To change the color of either the foreground color or background color, simply click one of the color boxes and select a new color in the **Ulead Color Picker** dialog box. Another way of selecting a color is to use the Eyedropper Tool. Simply click on the color that you want on the

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Ulead Color Picker dialog box

animation frame and the color selected will replace the existing foreground color. The Eyedropper Tool can also be used to find out the exact RGB and HSB values of a color. Then, enter these values in the Ulead Color Picker dialog box to change the background color.
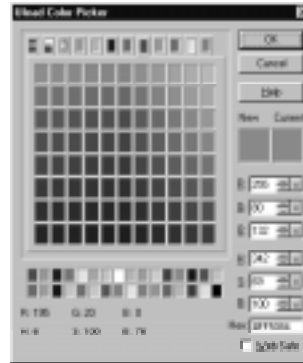
Editing objects in other image editors

During object editing, sometimes you might need another image editor such as Ulead PhotoImpact 6 to create more advanced effects. To help you easily open an image editor from GIF Animator, select **Edit: Favorite Image Editor - Organize Favorite Image Editor** to locate the path of the program. Later, a shortcut icon will be displayed next to the **Add Video** button on the Standard Toolbar. You can then click the button to quickly switch to that image editor. Once you're done, simply save it and you will automatically switch back to GIF Animator so you can continue your editing work.

Adding a shadow

You can introduce a depth to an image by applying a shadow to a selected object. To do so, select **Object: Shadow** (or right-click an object and select **Shadow**). Here, you can control the color, position, direction, transparency, size, and soft edge.
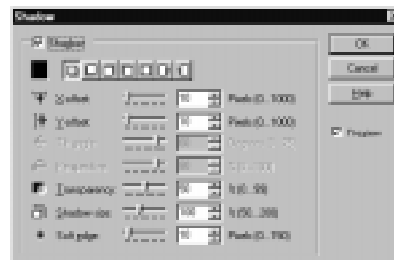
Shadow dialog box

Separating the shadow from an object

A shadow can be separated from its attached object, and thus becomes a stand-alone object so you can have more control of it. This also allows you to edit both the object and the shadow as individual objects in your animation. To do so, select **Object: Split Shadow** while an object with a shadow is selected. (You can also right-click the object and select **Split Shadow**.)

Managing multiple objects

Animations created using GIF Animator are object-based. Mostly, your animation will contain more than a single object and therefore problems might occur when managing them. There also can be instances that you want to do certain things to the objects, but you want to do it easily and quickly. GIF Animator provides the solution with a number of commands.

Combining objects

This command unites all selected objects and converts them into a single object. To do so, just choose the objects you want, and select **Object: Combine as Single Object** to merge the selected objects in the animation as a single object.

> **Note:** *The newly combined object is applied to all the frames in the animation.*

Flattening frames

Another way of combining objects is to flatten the frames. This command takes all the objects in the selected frame then creates a new single object out of it. You can choose multiple frames in the Frame Panel, and then select **Frame: Flatten Frames as Single Object**.

> **Notes:**
> - *The **Flatten Frames as Single Object** command is only applied to the selected frame(s).*
> - *When a new merged object is created in each frame, all original objects are still retained.*
> - *The number of new objects created will depend on the number of frames selected.*

Distributing objects

This command automatically spreads selected objects in a frame to its succeeding frames. Each selected object will then be inserted into a frame. This command is particularly useful when there are multiple objects in a frame, and you want to spread them evenly into other existing or new frames.

To distribute objects to frames:

1 Select the frame where you want to start distributing objects in the Frame Panel. (For details on Frame Panel, see *page 33*.)

2 Select the objects to be distributed in the workspace or Object Manager Panel. At least two objects must be selected.

3 Select **Object: Distribute to Frames**. Each selected object is then placed into succeeding frames. (New frames will be automatically created if there are no succeeding frames.)

Notes:

• *The sequence to distribute objects is based on the order of objects. You can easily check/modify the order in the Object Manager Panel (see **page 22**), or the Attribute Bar while the Pick Tool is selected.*

• *For all selected objects to be distributed, the one at the bottom (in terms of object order) will remain in the selected frame after distribution.*

Synchronizing objects

This command maintains uniform attributes of objects in the frames that you select. This saves your time, and you don't need to move to each frame and modify the attribute of the same object, which sometimes can be a very time-consuming process.

To synchronize objects across frames:

1 Select the objects for synchronization in the workspace or Object Manager Panel.

2 In the Frame Panel, select the frames you want to apply synchronization.

3 Select **Frame: Synchronize Objects Across Frames**.

4 Determine the settings for the object synchronization process.

5 Click **OK**.
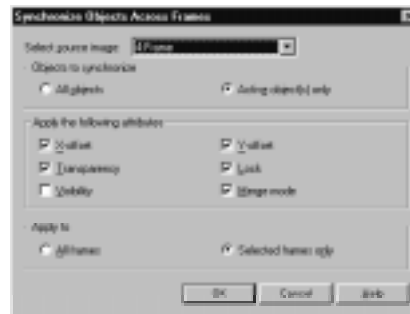
*Synchronize Object Across Frames dialog box*

Working with frames

An animation project comprises a number of frames, and each frame contains several objects. The whole animation is produced in a way based on the variation in frame changes. Therefore, GIF Animator provides a storyboard-like Frame Panel that helps you visually organize all the frames in a chronological sequence. In the Frame Panel, you can precisely control each frame's attributes, or even add special effects like tweening.

> **Note:** *The **Frame** menu also provides some frame-related commands.*

Frame Panel

The Frame Panel, by default, is displayed at the bottom of the screen. However, like most of the panels, this can be repositioned to another location or made to float. The Frame Panel offers a variety of commands that pertain to creating your animations in GIF Animator. Below is an introduction to each function in the Frame Panel.
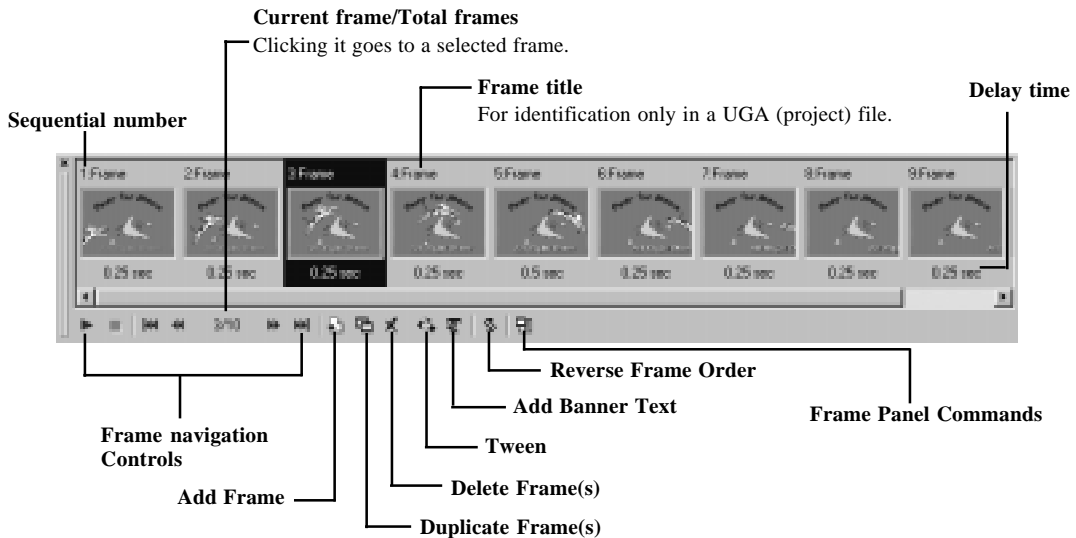
- Click to select a frame. The selected frame is highlighted in blue. And its associated objects and the canvas are displayed in the workspace.
- Double-click a frame to view or edit its properties such as delay time, remove method, and frame title.
- Just like other standard Windows program, the Frame Panel allows you to use **[Shift]** and **[Ctrl]** for multiple frame selection.

- To change the sequence of frames, use the navigation controls or directly drag them within the Frame Panel.
- Right-clicking a frame pops up a menu for quick access to frame-related commands.

Removing frames

In the course of the animation, each frame must be "removed" from the screen once it has been displayed. The removal method affects the overall appearance of the animation - some Web browsers, however, don't support all the removal methods available. To set the removal method, select the frame(s) you want in the Frame Panel, and then right-click to choose **Frame Properties**. Here, select a removal method (as described below) from the **Removal method** list:

- **Smart** - This is the default setting. GIF Animator automatically decides the best removal method for each frame. It's strongly recommended to use this method, as it can reach a balance between image quality and file size.
- **Do Not Remove** - All previous frames are not cleared from the screen and all subsequent frames are stacked on top of it. This method usually produces the smallest file size.
- **To Background** - A frame is removed and replaced with the background color.
- **To Previous State** - A frame disappears in the same manner as it appeared.
- **Web Browser Decides** - A frame is removed using the browser's default method. Yet, this method is not recommended, because you will probably get different effects with different browsers.

Frame Properties dialog box

Notes:
- *The Smart removal method actually selects either "To Background" or "Do Not Remove." If the selected frame has a transparent area, when the same area is non-transparent in the previous frame, the removal method will be set to "To Background." In other cases, the method will always be "Do Not Remove."*
- *If you open an existing animation, the default removal method is based on its original setting.*

Tweening

Tweening adds or updates frames between two key frames so the first key frame can gradually "evolve" into the second frame. All newly added in-between frames serve as the transitional frames during tweening.

To do tweening between two frames:

1   Select the object(s) you want to tween in the workspace or in the Object Manager Panel.

2   In the end key frame, determine the end attributes of the object you want to tween. For example, reposition the object to the end position you want or change the transparency setting of the object.

3   Select **Frame: Tween**, or select it on the Frame Panel. This opens the Tween dialog box.

4   In the **Frame** tab, choose the frame number of the starting and the ending key frames. Also, decide how you would like to generate the frames in the options provided below.

5   Click the **Objects** tab. Here, you can decide what objects and object attributes will be considered for tweening.

6   Click the **Start**/**Stop Preview** button to see how the tweening will look like. Return to steps 4 and 5 as needed.

7   Click **OK**.
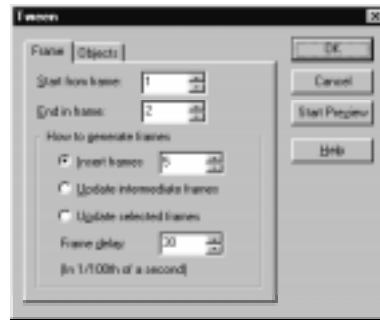
Tween dialog box - Frame tab

Tween dialog box - Objects tab

Note: *The Tween dialog box need not be closed in order for you to edit the objects in your animation. This allows you to edit the object in the workspace then have a real time preview for the changes you've made. This eliminates the need to open the Tween dialog box everytime you make subtle changes to the attributes of the object.*

Banner Text

Over the past few years, banner ads have been considered an effective and inexpensive way of online advertisement in the Internet world. There are several ways to create striking banner ads, one of which is to have animated text. Ulead's GIF Animator lets you easily do this with the banner text feature.

Adding Banner Text

To start making the banner text for your animation project, select the frame where you want to start adding the banner text and select **Frame: Add Banner Text [Ctrl+Alt+B]**. Experiment from a range of standard text to scrolling effects, add neon or shadow and design like a pro. Whether you are a novice or an expert, this user-friendly feature will help you create "eye-catching" banner text in no time.

To create banner text:

1 Select a frame (as the first frame for the banner text) and then select **Frame: Add Banner Text**.

2 In the **Text** tab, type your text in the text entry box.

3 Use these options to format your text:
   - **Font**, **Size**, **Style**, **Baseline shift**, and **Character spacing** are applied to individual words or letters within your text.
   - **Color** and **Alignment** options affect the entire text.

4 Click **Shadow** to add a 3D look to your text.

5 Select **Fit in window** when you want the typed text to completely fit in the text entry box.

6 Select **Anti-aliasing**, **Kerning**, and **Vertical** options for your text. (See **Help** for further information.)

7 Click other tabs to apply effects, set playback options and apply neon to your text as needed.

8 Click **OK**, and then choose to export text as individual objects or banner text.

Add Banner Text dialog box - Text tab

Notes:
- *To apply different format options to individual letters or words, select them and then set their attributes.*
- *Choosing **Create as Individual Objects** transforms banner text into a text object that can be edited by selecting **Object: Text - Edit Text**. Meanwhile, **Create as Banner Text** creates a banner object that can be modified only by selecting **Frame: Edit Banner Text.***
- *The text in the preview window can be repositioned and the banner text area can also be resized by dragging the nodes.*
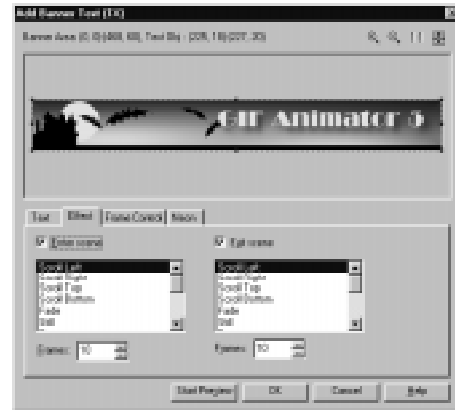
To apply effects:

1 In the **Effect** tab, select from the lists how you want your banner text to enter and exit the scene.

2 Enter the number of **Frames** to set how long you want each effect to take place in the scene.

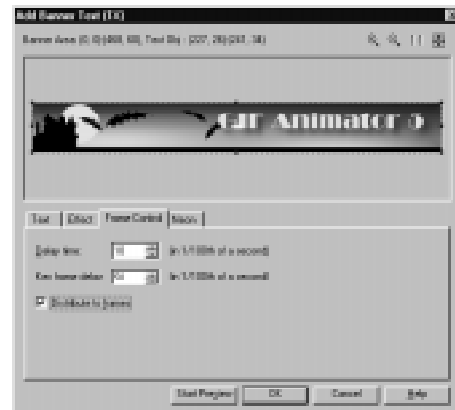*Add Banner Text dialog box - Effect tab*

To set playback options:

1 In the **Frame Control** tab, enter the **Delay time** to set the amount of time in which you want each frame to remain on the screen before switching to the next frame.

2 Enter **Key frame delay** to specify the interval time between the move-in and move-out effect. For example, the higher the value the longer the banner text will pause before it exits off the scene.

3 **Distribute to frames** places the banner text over existing frames in your animation project. To generate more frames, clear this option to insert new frames for the banner text. (Play with this feature to see different results in your animation project).

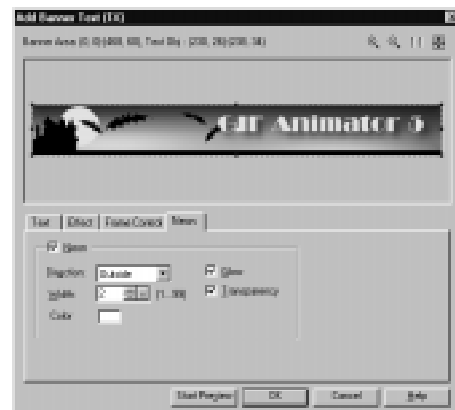*Add Banner Text dialog box - Frame Control tab*

To apply the neon effect:

1 In the **Neon** tab, select the **Neon** check box to add neon effects to the text.

2 Select the **Glow** check box to apply a blinking effect to the text.

3 Select the **Transparency** check box to make the text area transparent, allowing the background to show through.

Add Banner Text dialog box - Neon tab

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Using Plug-in filters

GIF Animator lets you apply wild plug-in effects directly to the frames in your animation project rather than having to open each frame in an outside editor to apply effects there. You can apply the effect to a single frame or to a range of selected frames.

To load plug-ins into GIF Animator:

1   Select **File: Preferences**.
2   Click the **Plug-in Filters** tab to bring it to the foreground.
3   Select a check box. When the Browse dialog box opens, locate the folder which contains the plug-ins you want to use.
4   Click **OK** and restart GIF Animator. The plug-ins are then added to the Filters menu.

Preferences dialog box - Plug-in Filters tab

To apply plug-in filters:

1   Select the frame(s) to which you want to apply the plug-in filter.
2   Select **Filter:** *Filter Name*.
3   Adjust the filter's settings until you get the desired effect.
4   Click **OK** to apply the filter to the selected frame(s). If you created a selection area in the **Edit** mode, the filter is applied only to that selection, across all frames.

Notes:
- *Before using plug-in filters in GIF Animator, setup plug-in filter paths in the Preferences dialog box first.*
- *Available plug-in filters depend on the plug-in filters installed in your computer.*
- *Some plug-in filters may not work in GIF Animator. This is because these filters work only from within their associated programs.*

Using Video F/X

Video F/X is a collection of special filters for GIF Animator. Borrowed from Ulead's award-winning digital video software, MediaStudio Pro and VideoStudio, they are professional level video transition and filter effects. Each effect automatically creates a string of new frames once it is applied, so it's usually best to have only one or two frames at most in your project animation when using the effect. Otherwise, the additional frames generated by the Video F/X effect may sometimes make your animation too large and unwieldy.

To apply a Video F/X transition effect:

1 Select the starting frame where you want to apply the transition effect.

2 Click the **Video F/X** menu and select a transition effect type. For example, you can select **Video F/X: Peel-Turn Page-Peel**.

3 Enter the number of **Frames** over which you want the effect to occur. (These are the frames that will be added to your animation project.)

4 Enter the **Delay time** and set up other options as needed.

5 By default, the **Source frame** (starting frame) shows the starting frame and the **Target frame** shows the end frame in which the Video F/X effect will occur. To create a "fade-in" or "fade-out" effect, select **Matte** either as your Source or Target and set the Matte color.

6 Click **OK**. The new frames are added to your animation project.

Notes:

- In the Video F/X menu, all transition effects are in the first part. All effects below the separator are filter effects. (See **page 40** for illustration.)

- In step 1, if you select the very last frame of the project as the Source frame, then the Target frame will be the first frame of the project.

- By default, the Target frame is the first succeeding frame after the Source frame. If you want to use a different Target frame (after the Source frame is selected), press **[Ctrl]** and click to select it in the Frame Panel. All original frames between the two selected frames will not be included in the Video F/X effect.
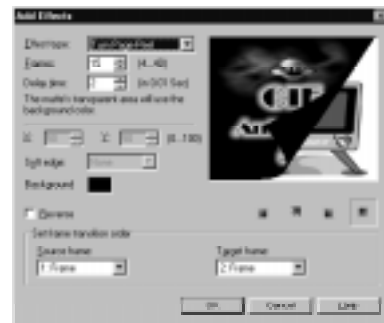

*Add Effects dialog box - Turn Page-Peel*

Tip: *You can switch to other transition effects from the drop-down list box without closing the dialog box. Experiment with other effects until you get the result you want.*

To apply a Video F/X filter effect:

1 Select the starting frame where you want to apply the video filter.

2 Click the **Video F/X** menu and select a type of video filter. For example, you can select **Camera Lens: ColorShift**. This creates a gradual color change across your image or selected area.

3 In the **Apply Filter** dialog box, type the number of frames you want to create for the effect. (These are the frames that will be added to your animation project.) Then, click the color box if you want to change the background color used for the video filter.

4 A dialog box then opens for that video filter effect. Set up the options for the effect as needed.

5 The **Key Frame Controller** located below the original view window allows you to set different levels of effects at any given point during the sequence.

6 Click the **Play** button to see a preview of the applied filter effect.

7 Click **OK**. The new frames are added to your animation project.

Video F/X: transition effects

Video F/X: filter effects
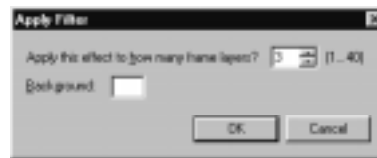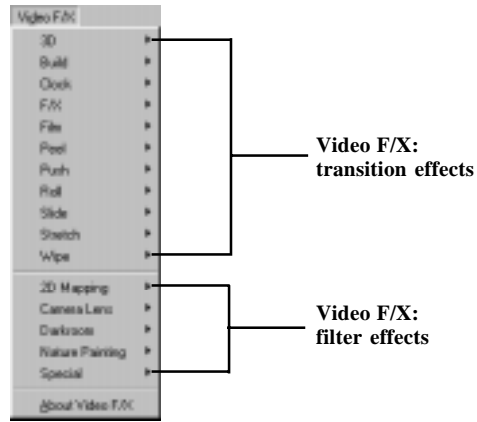
Add Filter dialog box
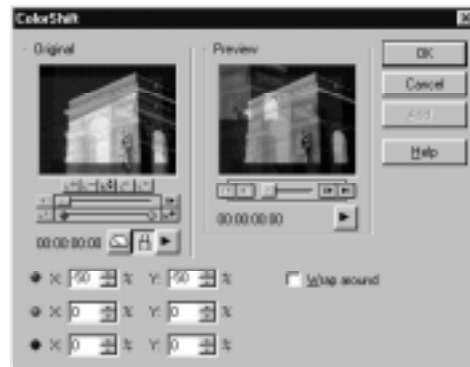
Video F/X: Camera Lens - ColorShift dialog box

Note: *Since video filters do not support a transparent background, the background color will be used to fill the transparent area in a GIF animation.*
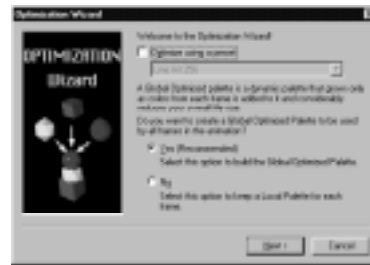
40

Optimizing your animation

In the time where the download duration of Web pages are of utmost importance, creating quality animations with small file sizes are of great concern. A constant headache for Web designers, this burdensome problem is solved by GIF Animator. With GIF Animator, striking a balance between the quality and size of an animated GIF file is easily achieved with the tools available.

GIF Animator offers the **Optimize mode** where there are several options for determining how to achieve the best optimization results for your animated GIF files. GIF Animator offers its users different ways to optimize their animations that beginners and advanced users can both appreciate. Below are the five methods of optimizing in GIF Animator:

- **Optimization Wizard** - The Optimization Wizard offers a guided step by step process in compressing your animated GIF files. You just have to select the options you want then let GIF Animator worry about the compression process.

- **Color Palette** - The Color Palette allows you to manipulate the colors used in the global palette of the animation. Here you can add, delete, and replace colors in your global palette.

> **Note:** *You cannot edit the local palette in the Optimize mode, you can only view it. If you want to edit the colors in the local palette then you have to use the Index Editor. To learn more about the Index Editor, see **page 52**.*
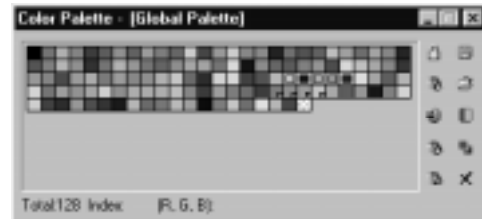
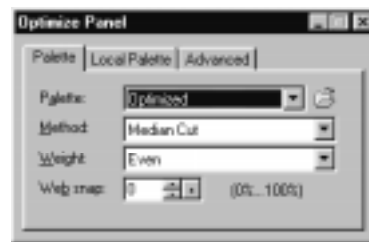- **Optimize Panel** - The Optimize Panel offers various methods to compress the animation. This panel helps you determine the colors to use in the animation along with the Color Palette.

Optimization Wizard

Color Palette

Optimize Panel

- **Compress by Size** - This compression method in GIF Animator allows you to determine the desired target file size for the animated GIF file or assign a compression ratio to use when optimizing the animation.
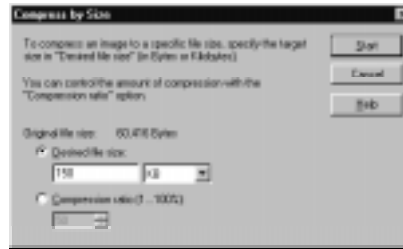
Compress by Size

- **Attribute Toolbar** - There are several compression options also available on the Attribute Toolbar such as Dither and Lossy. The Attribute Toolbar also plays host to various commands that let you work better in optimizing your animations. Look below to see the available tools on the Optimize mode Attribute Toolbar.

The Optimize mode workspace

The Optimize mode workspace can provide side by side real time previews of your optimization settings. Whenever there is a change in your optimization settings, you can immediately see the result of the changes in the workspace. The workspace also provides information on the before and after optimization file sizes and download times of the animation.
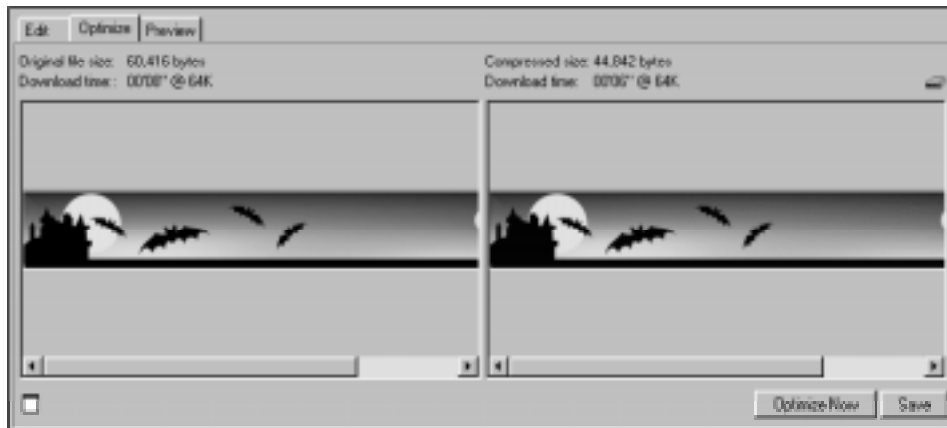
Before Optimization Window   *After Optimization Window*

Optimization process

Depending on the need of your GIF animations (for example, file size, appearance and other qualities), the optimization process can greatly vary. In GIF Animator, the Attribute Toolbar in the Optimize mode offers plenty of optimization options. All options here are arranged and displayed based on the complexity level, starting from the left (**Preset**, the most basic) of the Attribute Bar all the way to the right (**Color Palette**, the most advanced).

The following introduces you to some suggestions and techniques about GIF optimization.

- It's strongly recommended that you start using presets (on the very left side of the Attribute Toolbar) first. Just select a preset, which will be applied to all the frames in the animation. These easy-to-use presets not only help you reduce all the hassles about which options to select and what the appropriate settings are, but reduce the file size to a considerable level.
- To see the optimization result, check the preview window on the right and look at the compressed size to see if you are satisfied with the results. The image displayed in the preview window is already in the actual index color (maximum 256 colors) as seen in a browser, so you can compare it to the True Color image on the left. Use the Zoom Tools and move between frames as needed. You can also click the **Preview** tab (see *page 46*) to see how the animation looks, or click the preview button (on the Standard Toolbar) for previewing in a specific browser of your choice. (You can preview in a number of browsers simultaneously for comparison.)
- If you're not satisfied with the optimization result, change the preset or create a new one. You can further fine-tune all other options on the Attribute Toolbar. Use the context-sensitive Help to check the description for each option.
- For color, dither, and lossy options, click the arrow button and then drag the slider to quickly change settings.

A slider displays after clicking the arrow

Example of a customized preset with an asterisk (*)

Tips on preset

- If your images are more toward photo-realistic like natural scenery and people, use photo-related presets. Whereas, if your images are more toward line arts like hand-drawn images, use line arts-related presets.
- You can modify, delete, or create presets. A customized preset has an asterisk (*) to distinguish it from the 10 system presets.
- Be careful whenever deleting (system) presets, as the undo action is not available.

Tips on dither

- Set dither at 100 to get the best color gradient result for photo-realistic images. Setting it at 0 works best for line-arts images. However, higher values increase the file size.
- The **Auto-remove garbage pixels** button should be always enabled (pressed) when dithering. This not only removes many unnecessary pixels, but generates the GIF at a smaller size.

Tips on matte

- On a Web page, mostly you will have the animation GIF displayed against a color background. Thus, choosing a matte is important so you can preview how the GIF will look and fit in your Web page. The matte is also crucial when you want to create a semi-transparent effect. In fact, inheritantly GIF animations support two cases only: fully or none transparent. So, what if you have a semi-transparent effect in your GIF animations? (For example, you have a selection with soft edge.) To make the GIF blend into the background color of a Web page, select the Web page background color from the **Matte** option.
- It's strongly suggested that the **Transparency** button be enabled (pressed). Enabling this button reduces the file size without sacrificing image quality. Yet, if the Frame delay time interval is very short and the GIF has a large transparent area, you can disable this option (and the **Remove redundant pixels** option in the Optimize Panel if needed). This is because some browsers might not display this type of GIF animation smoothly.

Tip on auto optimization

- If there's a long series of frames in the animation, you can disable the **Auto-optimize when settings change** button to turn off real-time auto optimization, which might be time-consuming in this case. By doing so, you can customize all optimization options all at once and view the optimization result (including optimized Global/Local color palettes) later.

Tips on Optimize Panel

- In the **Local Palette** tab, select the **Local Palette for current frame** option when using a local palette for a selected frame. The **Preset** list underneath then applies to this frame only.
- It's strongly suggested that you select **Optimized** in the **Palette** list (on the **Palette** tab) and the **Remove redundant pixels** option (on the **Advanced** tab). The **Web 216** option in the **Palette** list is rarely used as it's designed for obsolete 256-color monitors.

Tips on Color Palette

- In a Global color palette, select a color for editing by directly clicking a color cell. Another way is to move the mouse over the preview window on the right. The cursor now becomes an eyedropper. Just move the mouse to the color you want and the click it. The selected color cell will be encased in white. Then, you can start editing by using the control buttons.
- To select multiple colors, use the mouse and **[Ctrl]**/**[Shift]** as you would in Windows Explorer.
- A locked color remains intact, no matter how the optimization settings change.
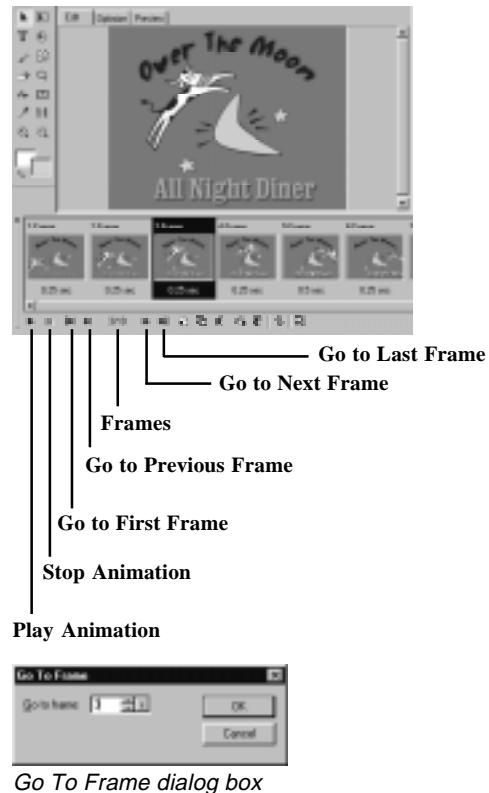
Previewing your work

Previewing is a way of checking how your work will really look in a browser. This lets you see whether your animation project has turned out the way you planned. GIF Animator provides a quick and simple way to check your masterpiece.

In the Edit mode

The best thing about the Edit mode is that you can edit and preview your work on the same workspace. It allows you to work closely and see the changes in your animation whenever you make adjustment on the object and frame properties. This is convenient when you want to see how you are progressing.

To preview using the Edit mode:

1 In the **Edit** mode, click the **Play Animation** button in the Frame Panel. This will show your animation.

2 Click the **Stop Animation** button to discontinue the animation.

3 If you want to preview a particular frame, choose from the options below:

 • To see the beginning or end frame of your animation project, click the **Go to First Frame** or **Go to Last Frame** button.

 • To go back or forward a frame, click the **Go to Previous Frame** or **Go to Next Frame** button.

 • To go directly to a frame, click the **Frames** button and enter the number of the frame in which you want to view then click **OK**.

Go to Last Frame

Go to Next Frame

Frames

Go to Previous Frame

Go to First Frame

Stop Animation

Play Animation

Go To Frame dialog box

Note: *The Edit mode uses True Color on your animation project. The appearance of the colors may slightly differ when previewed in a Web browser.*

In the Preview mode

The Preview Mode is where you can check your work and to give an idea on how your animation will appear when viewed in a Web browser. However, when you switch to this mode, the editing tools and some menu options will be unavailable at this point.

To preview using the Preview mode:

1   Click the **Preview** mode tab.
2   Press **[Esc]** or click the **Edit** mode tab to return to the workspace.

Note: *Make sure that you have Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5 (or higher version) installed on your computer. Otherwise the Preview mode will not be available.*

In a Web browser

Before you publish your animation on the World Wide Web, previewing your work in an actual browser such as Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator is always a good idea. This is to make sure that everything will show exactly the way you want it to be.

You can click one of the browser button in the Standard Toolbar to load your animation project in Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator. When you have Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator installed on your computer, GIF Animator provides an option in the **File: Preferences - Preview** dialog box which automatically detect the location of these Web browsers.

If you want to see how your animation project looks in a different browser, you can customize a browser for your GIF Animator.

To customize a different Web browser:

1   Select **File: Preferences**.
2   Click the **Preview** tab.
3   In **Other browsers**, click the open button to open and locate the path that contains the Web browser you want to add.
4   Click **OK**.
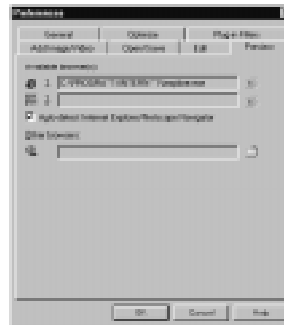
Preferences dialog box - Preview tab

Saving & exporting

Once you are done with creating and editing your animation, you will undoubtedly want to save it. GIF Animator provides several output methods to meet your specific needs. You can save your work as an animated GIF file, or save the frames of the animation individually, or even output it as digital movie file. In addition, GIF Animator also gives you an option of exporting your work as a stand-alone executable file.

Saving your work

It is important that you save your work every now and then whether it is finished or not. Saving allows GIF Animator to keep the object information of your animation project (*.uga), which you can open again so that you can continue your work where it was left off.

When you save your animation for the first time or select **File: Save As**, you will find a list of different saving file formats to choose from in the Save As menu. The following is a brief overview of where these file formats are best to use.

- **GIF File** - This saves the entire animation project by stacking it together as a standard GIF file. GIF(s) are highly used format for displaying animations in the World Wide Web because of its lossless compression.
- **UGA File** - GIF Animator defaults to saving files in its native format. This format retains all the object informations individually making it easier to modify it in the future.
- **UFO File** - UFO stands for Ulead File for Objects format which can be edited using Ulead PhotoImpact (6). Select a frame and save it in UFO format file then you can edit the objects and base image independently of each other using Ulead PhotoImpact (6).
- **PSD File** - This is Adobe Photoshop's native file format. Select a frame to save, edit the objects, layers, and base image independently from one another with Photoshop.
- **Image Frames** - This is quite useful when you intend to save all the frames as individual, sequentially numbered files. Each frame in the sequence are labeled as *name001.jpg, name002.jpg* and so on, where *name* is the one you specified in the Save As dialog box.
- **Video File -** GIF Animator allows you to save your animation project in a video file format such as AVI or MPEG. These file formats can transmit the images faster by compressing and streaming them.
- **Macromedia Flash (SWF) -** Shockwave Flash is Macromedia's native file format. This is ideal for presenting vector-based graphics such as text, line drawings or any non-photo-realistic imagery in the Web.

> **Tip:** At least, you should save your animation as the project format (*.uga), so that all attributes you set in GIF Animator can be always retained.

To save as separated image files:

1   Select **File: Save As - Image Frames**. The Save As dialog box opens.

2   Locate the folder to which you want to save the file, then enter the base name of the image sequence. (All images will have this name plus a sequence number.)

3   Select an image type to save. JPEG, at a smaller size compared to PNG, is suitable for a photo-realistic image. Yet, choosing PNG produces a lossless image quality during compression. PNG also keeps the alpha channel pixels, so the transparent effect can be retained.

4   Select **Export currently selected frame** if you want to apply exporting to a particular frame or select **Export all frames** to apply exporting to the entire frames of your animation project.

5   Click **Save**.
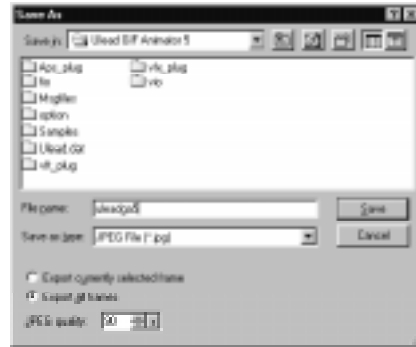
Save As dialog box (Image Frames)

To save as a video file:

1   Select **File: Save As - Video File**. The Save Video File dialog box opens.

2   Enter a file name for the new video and the location to which you want to save it.

3   Select the type of video file you want to create. The choices here are dependent on the digital video codecs you have installed on your system. In most Windows environments you should at least have the Microsoft AVI option. The compression settings you will choose later are also dependent on the codec you select here. (Continued on the next page.)


Save Video File dialog box

4   Enter a subject or description for the file
    (this information will only be available to
    you when working with the file in
    selected video editors).

5   Click **Options**. The Video Save Options
    dialog box opens.

6   Set the video options - you can adjust the
    frame size to be larger or smaller than the
    original animation, set the frame rate (to
    control how smooth the animation plays),
    set the target playback speed (to optimize
    the files for playing on specific types of
    computers), and customize the
    compression options of the video file
    itself. Click **OK** when you're finished.

7   Click **Save** (in the Save Video File dialog
    box).

Subject menu
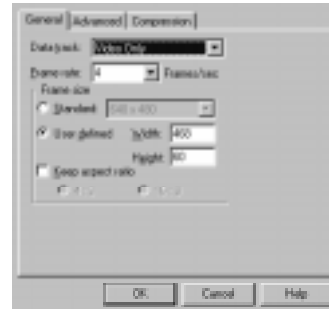
Video Save Options dialog box - General tab

To save as Macromedia Flash:

1   Select **File: Save As - Macromedia
    Flash (SWF)**. Choose **with BMP** if your
    animation project has a transparent
    background and objects are mostly
    vector-based image, otherwise choose
    with JPEG when the objects in your
    animation are raster graphics such as
    digital photos.

2   The Save As dialog box opens. Enter a
    file name for the new video and the
    location where you want to save it.

3   Click **Save**.

Save As dialog box - BMP and JPG

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Sharing your animation

Sometimes you may want to open and edit your animation with other applications. In this case, you need to save it using a format which the other programs can read. The process of saving a file in such manner is referred to as "exporting" the animation. GIF Animator's Export function lets you convert your work in three ways - as HTML file, as an active desktop item, or a stand-alone packaged animation. The packaged animation runs in any Windows environment outside of your Web browser, making it ideal for sending greetings and fun messages to family and friends.

To export as HTML File:

1. Select **File: Export - As HTML File**. The Export HTML Code dialog box opens.
2. Enter a file name for the new HTML file and the location to where you want to save it.
3. Click **Save**.

Export HTML File dialog box

To export as an Active Desktop Item:

1. Select **File: Export - As an Active Desktop Item**. The Active Desktop Item dialog box opens.
2. In the **Item name** box, enter a name or description for your Active Desktop (this information will be available to you in your desktop display properties).
3. Enter the vertical and horizontal coordinates where you want to anchor your animation in your active desktop.
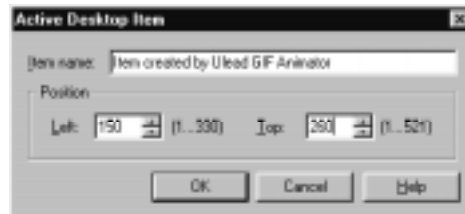

Active Desktop Item dialog box

Tip: *When you're setting the position value coordinator, values equal to 1 and 1 respectively place your animation on the top far left of the desktop, while values 298 and 81 place it on the bottom right.*
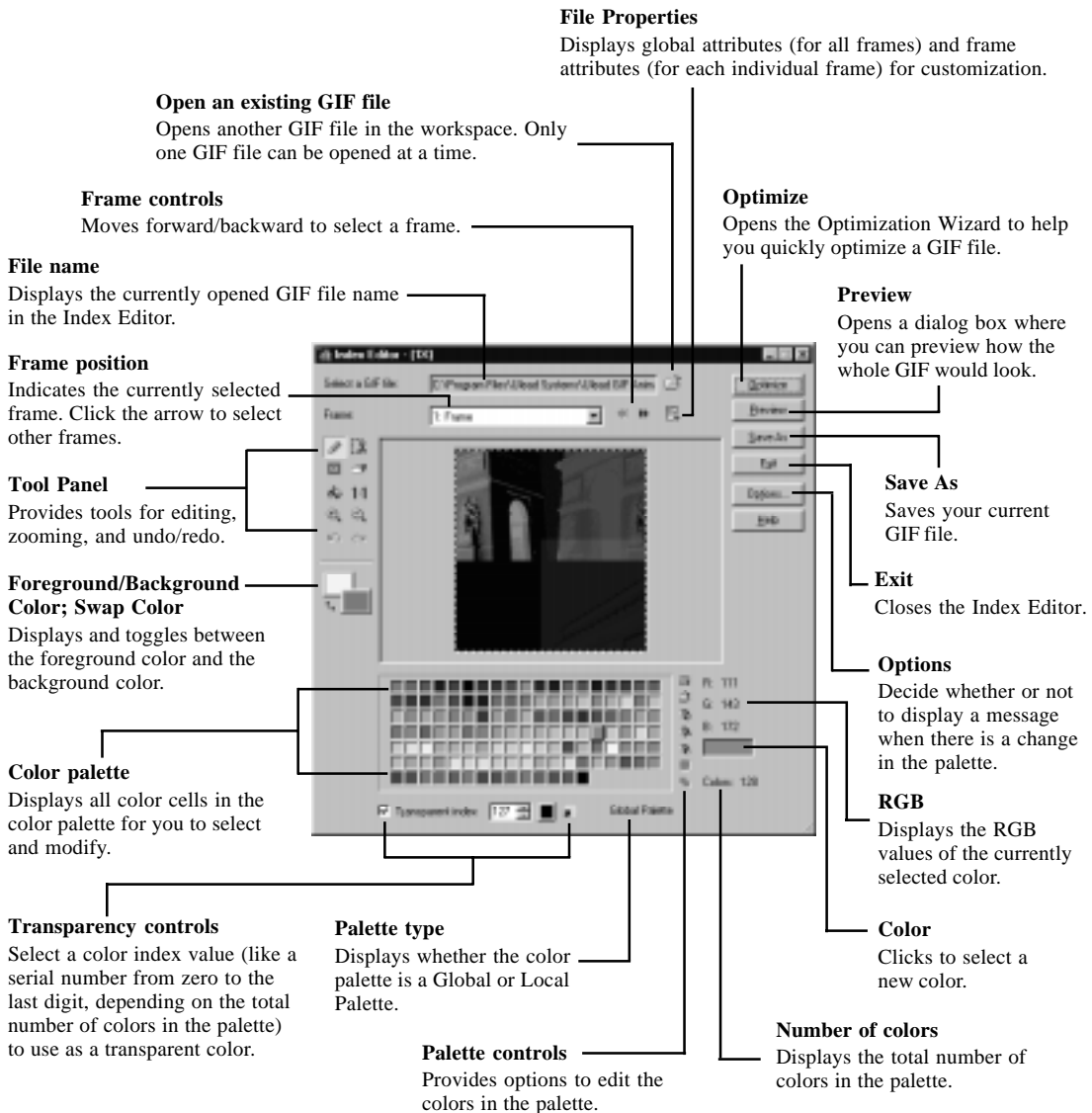
To export as a Packaged Animation:

1 Select **File: Export - As Animation Package (EXE)**.

2 Select a **Message box style** from the list of those provided (or select the None option to forego this). This creates a virtual notepad or greeting card in which to play your message and animation. You can set the size of the message box by selecting the **Custom dimensions in Pixels**.

3 Click **Import Style** when you want to add other graphics from your computer to the Message box style .

4 Select a **Sound** file to play along with your animation. Click the Browse button to locate the files in your computer. The Animation Packager supports both MIDI and WAV files.

5 In the **Generate executable file** entry box, specify the name and location to which you want to save the new packaged animation.

6 Select **Loop infinitely** if you want your animation to play continuously or enter the number of times you want your animation to repeat in **Loop count**.

7 Select **Go to URL** when you want to add a Web link in your animation.

8 Select a **Start** and **End frame position** from the lists - this will determine how your animation will begin and terminate from the screen.

9 Enter a message and select the font.

10 Click **OK**.
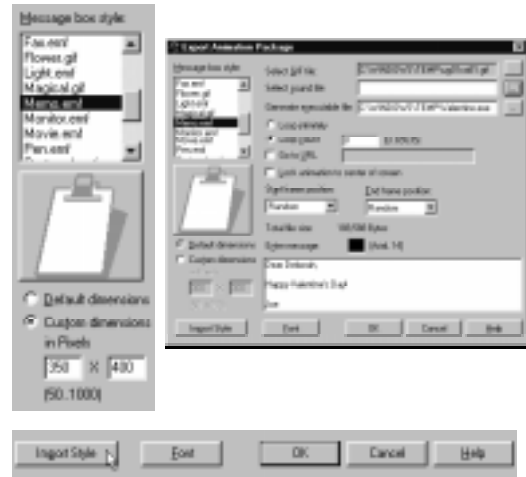
Index Editor

The Index Editor provides advanced customization features (especially for detailed pixel editing) for the current animation project in GIF Animator or an existing GIF file. The Index Editor is particularly useful for experienced GIF users who require more control over the GIF file size, precise pixel editing, removing redundant pixels, and other GIF attributes.

File Properties
Displays global attributes (for all frames) and frame attributes (for each individual frame) for customization.

Open an existing GIF file
Opens another GIF file in the workspace. Only one GIF file can be opened at a time.

Frame controls
Moves forward/backward to select a frame.

Optimize
Opens the Optimization Wizard to help you quickly optimize a GIF file.

File name
Displays the currently opened GIF file name in the Index Editor.

Preview
Opens a dialog box where you can preview how the whole GIF would look.

Frame position
Indicates the currently selected frame. Click the arrow to select other frames.

Tool Panel
Provides tools for editing, zooming, and undo/redo.

Save As
Saves your current GIF file.

Foreground/Background Color; Swap Color
Displays and toggles between the foreground color and the background color.

Exit
Closes the Index Editor.

Options
Decide whether or not to display a message when there is a change in the palette.

Color palette
Displays all color cells in the color palette for you to select and modify.

RGB
Displays the RGB values of the currently selected color.

Color
Clicks to select a new color.

Transparency controls
Select a color index value (like a serial number from zero to the last digit, depending on the total number of colors in the palette) to use as a transparent color.

Palette type
Displays whether the color palette is a Global or Local Palette.

Palette controls
Provides options to edit the colors in the palette.

Number of colors
Displays the total number of colors in the palette.

For the current animation project, select **File: Save As - GIF File**. Then, select the **Open in Index Editor** option and enter a file name. Next, click the **Save** button. The current animation project will be saved using this file name, and the Index Editor opens.

Notes:
- In the Optimize mode, you cannot edit the Color Palette when viewing the Local Palette. You can only edit the Local Palette in the Index Editor.
- Undo is not supported in palette editing. So, it's strongly recommended that you save the original palette as a backup before modifying it.

To edit color palettes in Index Editor:

1 Select a frame in the Frame list. (Open a GIF file first if you're using the Index Editor as a stand-alone program.)

2 Click any color cell in the color palette for selection. (Use **[Shift]** or **[Ctrl]** for multi selection as you would in Windows Explorer.) The color(s) you select is circled in red in the color palette.

3 Use the palette control buttons on the right for modification. You can also click the color area (under the RGB values) to select a new color.

4 If you need to use a transparent color, select the **Transparency index** option and then click the **Transparent color** button. Next, use the list or click a color cell to select a color.

5 Repeat steps 1 to 4 as needed. Meanwhile, you can click the **Preview** button to see how the new result would be. Here, you can play the whole animation, or view a specific frame.

6 When you're done, click the **Save As** button to save the GIF file.

Preview dialog box

Notes:
- In step 2, another way to select a color is to click **Foreground Color** under the Tool Panel. Next, move the mouse pointer (it becomes an eyedropper) over the image area where the pixel you want to edit is located, and then click to select it. (Use the Zoom Tool as needed to help you locate it.)
- The effect of a transparent color can only be seen in the Preview mode, or in a browser (after the GIF is saved).
- In the Index Editor, you can see the actual image content in every frame, especially when you choose to remove redundant pixels.

Appendix: GIF color palettes

In a GIF animation file, all images in each frame together contain an index table that defines the number of colors within the frame and exactly which colors each index represents. Every color in the maximum 256-color 'spectrum' has its own unique identification, which is stored in the image's color index (the color palette). In GIF files, each color in the index needs 3 or 4 bytes of data to define it (depending on how it was originally stored). Therefore, an image with a 256-color palette could have a color index of up to 1024 bytes in size.

There are two kinds of palettes for animated GIFs: a Global Palette, which defines the colors of all images within the frames in the animation use by default; and a Local Palette, which is unique to each frame in the file. When a new frame is inserted into a GIF animation, you can select to use either its Local Palette or the Global Palette.

When you are ready to insert frames into your animation file, you should decide how you want to manage your color palettes. If every frame contains virtually identical colors, then there is no reason to fatten your animation file with redundant information by including a Local Palette in each frame. However, if new frames have colors not found in the Global Palette, you might want to choose a Local Palette instead.

It's not always recommended that you use the Global Palette. Reducing the animation's file size is not as important as maintaining the quality of your work, but it should be a serious consideration. The best time to use a Local Palette instead of a Global Palette is when the frame being inserted is drastically different from the existing frames.

Shortcuts

Command	Shortcut	Command	Shortcut
File Menu		**Edit Menu**	
New	*Ctrl+N*	*Undo*	*Ctrl+Z*
Open Image	*Ctrl+O*	*Redo*	*Ctrl+Y*
Save (As UGA File)	*Ctrl+S*	*Cut*	*Ctrl+X*
Save As GIF File	*Ctrl+Shift+S*	*Copy*	*Ctrl+C*
Save As Image Frames	*Ctrl+E*	*Copy Merged*	*Shift+Ctrl+C*
Add Image	*Ins*	*Paste*	*Ctrl+V*
Optimization Wizard	*F11*	*Make Selection Area*	
Batch Process	*Ctrl+B*	*Transparent*	*Del*
Export As HTML File	*Ctrl+Alt+S*	*Canvas Size*	*Ctrl+G*
Preferences	*F6*	*Crop Canvas*	*Ctrl+R*
View Menu		**Object Menu**	
Actual View	*Ctrl+1*	*New Blank Object*	*Ctrl+Alt+D*
Zoom In	*+*	*Duplicate Object(s)*	*Ctrl+D*
Zoom Out	*-*	*Edit Text*	*Shift+E*
		Object Properties	*Ctrl+Shift+Enter*
Frame Menu		**Help Menu**	
Add Banner Text	*Ctrl+Alt+B*	*Help*	*F1*
Tween	*Ctrl+T*	*Context Sensitive Help*	*Shift+F1*
Add Frame	*Ctrl+Alt+F*		
Duplicate Frame(s)	*Ctrl+F*		

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