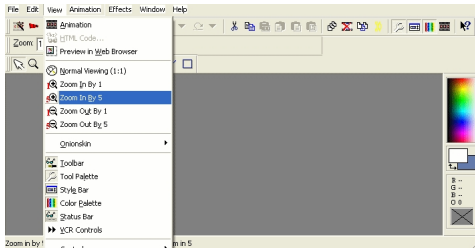


10 GIF Animation Applications Reviewed

Written by Michael Tunnell

Friday, 11 February 2011 04:39



This article will give you a rundown on all of the available gif animation programs and whether to try them or avoid them. This article does not contain in-depth reviews of each program because the purpose of this was to find the all-around best solution to making wrestling/mma gif animations. So while testing each program, if I find a flaw which makes the particular program unacceptable for this purpose I stopped testing and marked it "Avoid";

Ratings System

0-3 = Avoid | 4-6 = Mediocre | 7-8 = Potential | 9-10 = Best

So lets get started...

```
function get_style2 () { return "none"; } function end2_ () {  
document.getElementById('educationary2').style.display = get_style2(); }
```

All programs were tested with a very low quality and very low filesize video to allow quick testing. The video has over 1,400 frames totaling a massive 1.8 megabytes :)

1. Easy Gif Animator

- <http://www.blumentals.net/egifan/index.php>

Unfortunately for Blumentals' EGA, this program failed the first test whether or not it supported video importing. Although this program is a definite "avoid"; this may be the quickest program to receive an "avoid"; in this article. So I suppose they could look at it as a plus being "Zero to Avoid in Six Seconds";.

Rating = 0/10 (without video import support it is simply useless.)

2. CoffeeCup GIF Animator

- <http://www.coffeecup.com/gif-animator/>

CoffeeCup's GIF Animator passed the initial test of having video import support however after further testing it ultimately fails due to pointless limitations and poor interface. While it is true

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that CoffeeCup's has video support it is limited to a measly 500kb and I don't think I have seen a video that small in a decade. In fact, I used a tiny video with horrible quality, small resolution and it was only 1.8MB yet more than triple the size of this program's limitation. As for the interface, the program lacks a timeline which is required for any type of animation.

Rating = 1/10

3. VidGif

- <http://www.geovid.com/VidGIF/>

VidGif comes out of the gate with potential supporting a slurry of formats for video importing. Although it lacks a timeline it makes up for it with a preview window and keyframe support. However then it decides to kick itself in the groin. A huge "NO NO" for these types of programs is forcing watermarks anywhere on the animations and yet VidGif goes above and beyond the "NO NO" and forces a watermark on Three/Quarters of the gif. I can understand people wanting to make money on their pro-versions but make it a time based trial or a usage based trial...please refrain from making the trial 100% useless. BUT WAIT there's more, VidGif has a few more cons to throw on the fire with no support for custom watermarking and a HEFTY price tag of \$30.00 - The program is no longer even updated and they still charge \$30.00. VidGif could have been a useful program but it fails in many key areas and barely qualifies as mediocre.

Rating = 5/10

4. Iconcool GIF animator

- <http://www.iconcool.com/gif-animator.htm>

At first glance, Iconcool's program seems to be the first passable suggestion with a very nice interface (albeit an imitation of Adobe products), video importing support and, yet another Adobe imitation, LAYERS. However, unfortunately the video support is quite limited with a maximum of 200 frames allowed. Why is 200 frames too small? Well here at WrestleMation we only use the highest quality gifs and most of which are at least 300 frames and sometimes even more so with the gifs being more than the limitation there will practically never be a video with that small number of frames. To put that into perspective the 1.8mb file has over 1,400 frames.

Rating = 6/10

5. Alchemy Mindworks's GIF Construction Set

- <http://www.mindworkshop.com/alchemy/gifcon.html>

At first glance this program just screams DON'T USE ME! It comes equipped with an awful interface and a pointlessly hard to use vertical timeline, yes VERTICAL. It does have one thing going for it and that it supports video importing even the infamous 1.8mb video the others couldn't. However, it took almost 8 minutes for the 1.8mb video to import to the program thus making use of decent quality videos practically impossible. It could have been improved with a few fixes but this program is no longer updated so it is a screaming pass!

Rating = 3/10

6. EximiousSoft GIF Creator 5.75

- <http://www.eximioussoft.com/gifcreator.htm>

EximiousSoft (very hard to say) created a decent although somewhat quirky program with this GIF Creator. Unfortunately it's concept stage seemed to have more time spent on it than the creation stage as this program falls very short in execution. The user interface is very clunky and practically unusable. The one saving grace for this program doesn't actually save much, the overlaying objects feature with a simple built in editor is an interesting feature to say the least but the objects can only affect one frame at a time which makes the possible watermarking use of it just fail. The program does support video importing, yes the infamous 1.8mb! It has a fairly reasonable import time but again it uses a stupid vertical timeline. It had potential but the usability costs it some points.

Rating = 5/10

7. Advanced GIF Animator

- <http://www.gif-animator.com/>

At first the Advanced GIF Animator appears to be a program with potential...that is a lot of two-faced programs, huh?...unfortunately it lacks important features to make it a useful program. On the plus side, it has a very nice clean and simple interface as well as supports video importing without drastic limitations. However, it hurts itself with very slow import times, no support for animation watermarking and yet another program with that stupid vertical timeline. Am I missing something with this vertical timeline crap or are these people just trying to mess with me?

Rating = 5/10

8. GIF Movie Gear

- <http://www.gamani.com/index.htm>

Finally! A possibly decent program. Some of you may have already heard of this program as it is one of the most popular GIF animation programs out there however unfortunately it falls short in a couple areas. First, let's talk about the good qualities of this program. GIF Movie Gear has very good video import support with use of AVI files and a VERY fast importing process. It has a simple and clean user interface and very crisp response times when running processes. It also has decent editing options such as resizing, cropping and frame property options. With that said, it lacks any kind of watermarking abilities and the timeline setup is very clunky with a multi-column vertical timeline. (seriously, Gamani, multiple vertical timeline?)

Rating = 7/10 (add some watermarking abilities and a decent horizontal timeline and this program could be a contender)

9. Adobe Photoshop CS4 Extended

- <http://adobe.com/photoshop>

I know what you are thinking..."he's reviewing Photoshop in this? well of course it's going to win...it's Photoshop". Actually that is not the case, Photoshop is the best graphics manipulation program on the market today but the animation portion isn't a top priority for Adobe. Photoshop comes with two different types of timelines with frame by frame and also a keyframe timeline. It has a nice tweening system to automate some aspects of creating gifs however is useless for our purposes as we already have a lot of frames from the videos. It has Layers support which can be used for watermarking. It has multiple video format support for importing including AVI, MOV, MPG and MPEG. Then finally it has universal frame property settings allowing you to alter frame properties of multiple frames at the same time or even all of the frames. HOWEVER, it shoots itself in the foot like most of the programs seem to do by limiting the size of the videos that can be imported. Photoshop limits video importing to a maximum of 500 frames, again not even enough for the trusty 1.8mb testing file. The layers support for watermarking is very clunky, although it does work it tends to be unforgiving at the slightest mistake with the positions of the layers. As for the Keyframe timeline...it works nicely but it has a very large learning curve to get the animations just right. Overall you'd expect the best from Photoshop but actually it doesn't get the job done this time.

Rating = 7/10

10. Animation Shop 3

- <http://www.corel.com/servlet/Satellite/us/en/Product/1152105040771#tabview=tab0>

So it all comes down to one more program, will it be a breath of fresh air or will it be just another stink-bomb like the rest? Well, I'm happy to say...FINALLY, we have a usable and dare I say it, a GOOD program. In fact not only is it good, it stands on the podium all by itself. AS3 was originally developed by Jasc Software who brought to us the original Photoshop competitor, Paint Shop Pro, and made this unknown gem as a free addon to Paint Shop Pro. Corel bought Jasc Software and continued the series of Paint Shop Pro but unfortunately they stopped supporting Animation Shop. HOWEVER, Jasc did such a great job the first time that it has absolutely every feature I've been looking for in the other programs. It could be claimed that I am a little biased to this gem as I have been using it for years and 90% of the animations on WrestleMation were made with it but the fact is that this program deserves all the hype I'm giving it. In fact, I'm even going to list the features it has that puts it over the top:

Animation Shop 3 Features :

1. Video Import Support including AVI, MPG, M1V, MPV and MPEG formats with good video import speeds and with the only limitation being the hardware of the computer running it...it can do 5,000 frames at a time if you want but to be on the safe side do between 1,000 to 2,000. I'll show you how to find the frames range you want in a future article.

2. HORIZONTAL Timeline

3. Universal Frame Properties - like Photoshop you can alter one frame, several frames at a time or all the frames at once controlling the speed of the frames and the looping of the animation.

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4. Simple and Clean Interface which is quite easy to get started with.
5. Built-In Optimization upon saving the animations.
6. Basic Editing Tools such as Resizing, Cropping, Paint Bucket, Brush Tool, Text Tool, Eraser and more.
7. Tweening options such as frame transitions and image effects.
8. Watermark Support - which I will explain how to do in a future article.
9. Multitasking support with multiple animations in workspace.
10. Animation Previews for testing before optimization.
11. Best of all, it is the Cheapest program available at a mere \$19.99 and many more...

Rating = 9/10 (could be 10 if it had a few more ease of use features and was updated to support more video formats, overall it is the reigning champion after laying the smackdown on all of the competition.)

Well there you have it, the CHAMP IS HERE (pardon the Cena reference, I had to), and its name is Animation Shop 3 from Jasc/Corel.

What do you think of this article? Do you think I missed something about one of the mentioned programs or maybe I left out a program all-together? Post a comment below and let me know.

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