Creating menus in Flash MX 2004

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As we've seen in previous tutorials (http://www.dmxzone.com/index.asp?TypeId=28&CatId=703), Flash MX 2004 Professional has a wealth of new user interface components. Two of these components are used for creating menu bars like you would find in normal windowed applications, the other is used to create dynamic popup menus. These components are only available in Flash MX 2004 Professional, so you will need to have this version (either the full or trial version) to complete today's tutorial.

Although both the MenuBar component (for creating application type menu bars) and the Menu component (for creating pop-ip menus) can be dragged onto the stage and have properties that can be set with the component inspector, you will need to write some ActionScript in order to get them working.

The MenuBar component use instances of the Menu component to create the menus, so let's take a look at how to create popup menus with the Menu component.

The Menu Component

The structure of the menu that is displayed in your Flash application is defined by XML, which means that your menus are only built when the application runs. This does mean however, that you are going to have to go to a bit of extra effort to get your menu to display. All is not lost, because as we saw in last week's tutorial, you can easily get XML content into your Flash application and then bind it to a data aware component – which the Menu component is.

To get the ball rolling, let's create a simple menu that pops up when you click on a button in the Flash movie.

Creating a Static Menu

Create a new Flash Movie and save it as **menu.fla**. Even though we don't create the menu component structure in the Flash IDE using the Component Inspector, we still need to have the component in our application's library so that we can use it. Drag a menu component from the Component Library onto the stage and then immediately delete it. The Menu component is now present in the Library for this Flash application, but is not visible on the stage.

Now add a Command Button to the stage. Give it the instance name of **buttonTimer**, and change the label property in the Component Inspector to '**Timer**'. When the user clicks on the Timer button, our Flash application will display a number of options that will control a timer function in our application.