MediaPoint's presentation assembly line is largely point-and-click work.

When it comes to presentations, MediaPoint is further proof that the Amiga remains an institution in multimedia circles. A multipurpose presentation package, MediaPoint brings a new way of thinking to the Amiga. Words like "flexibility" and "innovative" spring to mind when using MediaPoint. Most importantly, it simplifies the task of using your Amiga to bring together video devices, graphics, sound, and animations.

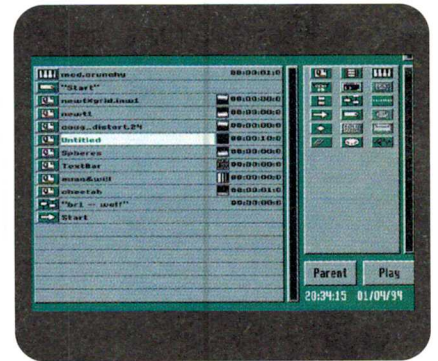## A TALE OF TWO INTERFACES

MediaPoint sports an unadorned, icon-based interface. To create a presentation, you simply drag icons that represent such multimedia tools as graphics, sounds, and laserdisc tracks into a listbox displaying the order in which they're accessed. Some of the icons represent gadgets called Xapps (pronounced "zaps"). These are external applications that MediaPoint calls on for capabilities that aren't in the main program. Xapps allow you to control such devices as CDTV (and CDXL animations), IV-24, MIDI, Studio 16, and a variety of laserdisc players.

REVIEWS

New Xapps can be easily added, too.

MediaPoint has a second interface that lets you create "pages" to add to scripts. The page editor allows you to design custom screens of graphics and text. Each page can have any number of draggable, resizable windows. Windows can become buttons for interactive presentations or can move around the screen using transition effects.

Pages are saved independently of scripts, so you can incorporate a page or group of pages into any number of different scripts. Likewise, graphics and sound aren't embedded in presentations, which means the script files stay quite small. If you need to copy the presentation to another system, MediaPoint includes a "mover" utility to copy the script's related data to a new location, such as a series of floppies or a Syquest cartridge.

MediaPoint does many complex things, and does them well. You can play animations (including Anim5, Anim7 and Anim8) from memory or directly from the hard drive. It lets you try your hand at synchronizing your presentation to MIDI or music modules (MODs), perform AmigaDOS and ARexx commands as script events, and even build interactive presentations that branch according to user input.

More than in any other respect, however, MediaPoint's strength lies in its transitions. You can perform transition effects on full-screen graphic images, MediaPoint pages, and even windows within pages. Users of PC-based packages like VideoShow will shake their heads in disbelief at the sheer volume of transitions in MediaPoint—more than 80 page effects and another 40 window transitions, plus variations based on pixel size and playback speed. Graphic windows can spin, fly and ooze onto the screen, and pages can push up or down and overfly the display, snapping back into place at the last moment. All of the effects are professionally designed. Despite all these features, MediaPoint falls somewhat short of being a definitive CG solution through its inability to do a credit roll. A technical-support representative indicated, however, that a credit-roll feature will appear in future versions.

MADE FOR TV

MediaPoint was clearly designed for the

needs of cable-TV information channels. A sophisticated scheduling option allows you to run a script between any two dates, on arbitrarily chosen days of the week, during any block of time. You can even segment a script into different time slots, so that certain pages will be displayed only on specific days.

Users of earlier versions of Media-Point couldn't leave their script unattended, because a presentation couldn't recover from a crash or power outage on its own. A ten-second delay in Media-Point 3.6 offers a partial solution and a forthcoming remote access module will fully correct this shortcoming.

MediaPoint is brimming with conveniences: The file requester offers thumbnail views of graphic images; a time-code tweaker automatically distributes script events along a timeline; and tools in the page editor make it easy to duplicate windows and position them precisely on the screen. MediaPoint even lets you advance pages at the press of a key—like Elan Performer—and records your timing, making it easy to synchronize a presentation to the downbeat of a musical score. Lastly, this is the first program I've seen of any kind that supports Workbench 3.0's datatypes.

WHAT'S THE XFER?

Despite the wealth of transitions, there's no preview button. To see the effect of a transition, even just a minor change near the end of a presentation, you must highlight the page and then press F to play forward. I discovered that you can disable every event in a script except the effect in question by scheduling everything else into the past or future—not elegant, but another solution. Also, it is possible to assign sounds to a presentation, but button-clicks have only a single default beep. An "Xfer" menu on the script-editor screen is undocumented—MediaPoint says it's for a soon-to-be-released remote-access module.

These problems aren't crucial, but they are signs that the program is not fully mature. To be honest, I was astounded by the power MediaPoint offers: Rarely does a program perform so many things flawlessly. Despite its shortcomings, I can't think of a better single tool for video and multimedia presentations.

—*Dave Johnson*

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