Button up

Ken McMahon looks at fasteners — buttons, that is. With lighting controls and bevel filters it's now easier to create them for your web sites.

**C**reating great-looking buttons for a web site is a much easier business than it used to be because most bitmap editors now include lighting controls and bevel filters. For all but the most simple web sites you need to produce quite a few buttons, so it will speed things up if you can automate part of the process. By using Picture Publisher's Bevel Factory and Lighting Studio to enhance the look of your buttons, and using the command centre to automate the process, you can quickly create a bucketful of excellent-looking buttons. You can use broadly the same technique in any application that supports scripting, like Adobe Photoshop, Corel Photopaint or Metacreations Painter.

1 **CREATE A NEW DOCUMENT** of 400 x 100 pixels at 72dpi (it's easier to work on at this size). Next, select the rectangular mask tool and set the option to a constrained size of 350 x 75 pixels.

2 **PRESS F7 TO BRING UP** the swatches palette and load either the Internet Explorer or Netscape palette, depending on which browser your site is optimised for [Fig 1].

▲ **FIG 1** LOAD A BROWSER PALETTE AND CHOOSE CONTRASTING COLOURS FOR THE BUTTON PANEL AND TEXT. BY USING A NETSCAPE OR EXPLORER PALETTE YOU'LL AVOID DITHERING OR UNWANTED COLOUR CHANGES WHEN THE IMAGE IS DISPLAYED IN THE BROWSER
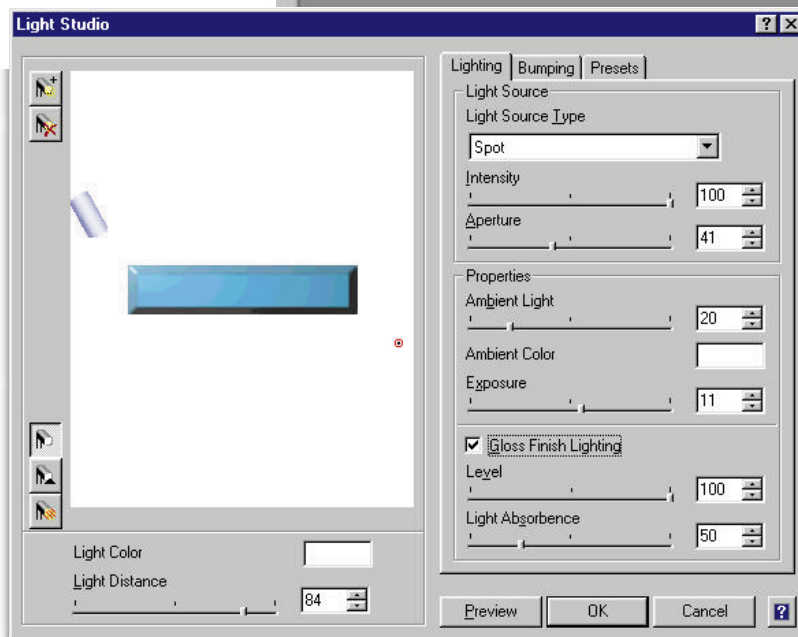

◄ **FIG 2** USE THE LIGHTING STUDIO AFTER BEVEL FACTORY TO CREATE A SPOTLIT EFFECT. IF YOU HAVEN'T COMBINED THE TEXT AND PANEL OBJECTS YOU'LL HAVE TO DO THIS FOR EACH. MAKE THE APERTURE AT LEAST **40** OR YOU'LL GET UNPLEASANT SHADOWS AT THE EXTREMITIES

▶ **FIG 3** IN THE COMMAND CENTRE YOU CAN GROUP OPERATIONS TO MAKE EDITING EASIER, BUT ALL YOU REALLY NEED TO DO IS DOUBLE-CLICK THE TEXT COMMAND AND SUBSTITUTE THE NEW TEXT. TO CHANGE THE PANEL COLOUR YOU WOULD SIMILARLY DOUBLE-CLICK THE TEXTFILL COMMAND FROM THE PANEL GROUP, THEN PRESS RESET AND PLAY
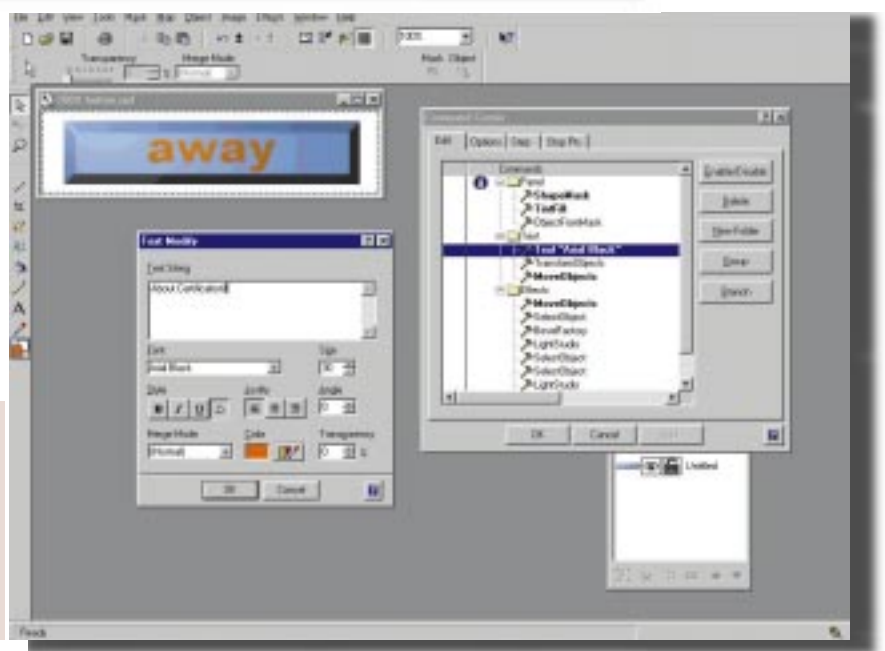
3 **SELECT A COLOUR** for the button and use the active colour fill tool to fill the mask. Then convert the mask to an object by pressing Ctrl-W or by using the object menu.

4 **PICK A CONTRASTING COLOUR** from the palette, select a suitable sans serif font (I've used Arial Black) and use the text tool to create the button wording. Don't worry if it doesn't fit exactly: you can use the transform tool to resize the text before moving it into position. Remember to leave sufficient space around the edges for the bevel we're going to apply later, and to leave space top and bottom for ascenders and descenders. It's also a good idea to start with the biggest word first, so you can be sure all the others will fit. If you create your template for the "home" button (as I have done) you're going to have problems with "about certification" or any other long text. If you combine the button and text objects using "combine
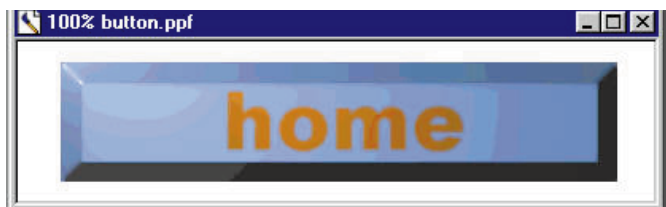
objects together" from the object menu, the subsequent light effects will apply to both the text and the panel but you won't be able to move it independently, which you may need to do for subsequent buttons [Fig 2].

Effective lighting

If you don't combine the text and panel, you'll need to apply the same lighting effects independently to each.

1 **SELECT THE NEW OBJECT** (or just the panel if you haven't combined) and choose Bevel Factory from the effects menu.

2 **DRAG THE PREVIEW WINDOW** so that you can see the top left corner of the button and set the parameters until you get the desired result. I've used a bevel width of 12 with a smoothness of 6, light intensity 85, highlight 95 and shadow depth 32.

3 **IF YOU CHECK** the light studio box and click OK, you'll go straight to the light studio dialog, but via this route it behaves strangely and gives unpredictable results. Instead, leave the box unchecked, click OK, then select Light Studio from the effects menu.

4 **IN LIGHT STUDIO** use a spotlight positioned at the top left of the button and position the focus point at the bottom right. Use a fairly wide aperture setting (I've used 50) and an intensity of 100. Check the gloss lighting box and click OK.

5 **SELECT SIZE** from the image menu and change the width to 100 pixels. The height will size proportionally, using the default settings.

That's the button finished. Save the file as a .ppf, remembering to check the save command list box. Then open the command centre from the edit menu. It helps to see what's going on if you group the steps. I've organised them into three folders: panel, text and effects. Just shift-select the relevant steps, hit the group button on the edit panel and rename the folder [Fig 3]. To create new buttons, double-click on the text step and insert your new text in the dialog that appears. Then select the steps tab, click the reset button and press play. You can edit the button colour in the same way, by double-clicking on the tintfill step.

Finally, if you want a transparent background, export the button in gif format: use the eyedropper to select the white background as the transparent colour. If you want to check how your button will look against a tiled background, hit the browse button and select your web page tile, then hit the full-screen preview icon.

Map copyright

Following Ian Cargill's question about reproducing maps (*PCW* July) a number of you wrote regarding the copyright position on copying OS maps. Andrew Newton thinks we're on dangerous ground. "As I understand it," he writes, "the law is very strict in stating that

BOOKS

Adobe Photoshop 5.0 Classroom in a Book

I looked at this one last month but Adobe has now released a new edition for version 5.0. It has almost doubled in size and is virtually completely rewritten. There is a chapter on using spot colour and a section at the back on Adobe Image ready. Disappointments? There's still only a 14-page colour section and little on using the new layer effects and history palette.
ISBN *1-56830-466-8*
Price *£41.50*

Fine Art Photoshop — Lessons in digital drawing
by MJ Nolan and R LeWinter

Here's a Photoshop book with a difference. Where numerous others attempt to enlighten you on the innermost workings of a package, this one shows you how to do something creative. Forget all those watercolour and charcoal effect filters, this book shows you how to draw and paint the traditional way, using Photoshop as a digital aid. If you are interested in developing your traditional drawing and painting skills in a digital direction, this would be an excellent tutor.
Published *Hayden Books*
ISBN *1-56205-829-0*
Price *£37.50*

written permission must be gained before copying a map…". My personal opinion is that if you are creating a new map, rather than a direct facsimile, and are only using an OS map as a reference, there's no problem. But where copyright is concerned, it pays to check. Andrew has provided contact details (*below*).

PCW CONTACTS

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