



Game for a path

Ken McMahon walks you through Quark XPress clipping paths.

The conventional way of handling cutouts is to create a clipping path in Adobe Photoshop and save it with the image. But when you import the picture into Quark XPress the unwanted background is absent.

One of the best reasons for upgrading from version 3.3x is the new version's support for Bezier functions, including the ability to use embedded clipping paths for text runarounds. You can also create and edit clipping paths directly in XPress without having to resort to an image editor.

Take a look at **Fig 1** for instance. The telephone picture is a Photoshop tif which has a path, but it hasn't been defined as a clipping path. Press CTRL-M to bring up the modify dialogue and hit the clipping tab. In the type pulldown, if you click embedded path and select the clipping path, it has exactly the same effect as if you'd saved the tif with its clipping path selected except that in XPress 4 you can now edit this path. The next field down allows you to specify an outset amount which expands the path to include more of the image (or less, if a negative value is inserted).

You can edit the shape of the path by clicking OK and selecting 'edit clipping path' from the item menu — the shortcut is CTRL-SHIFT-F10 [**Fig 2**]. Now you will

be able to see the Bezier clipping path complete with editable nodes.

One thing you need to take care with, here, is that although the path is based on the high resolution image file, all you can see when you are editing is the preview image. One way you can help yourself is to provide the best possible preview. So, in the display tab of the applications preferences dialogue, make sure you select 24-bit colour tiffs.

So far, so good, but what if your imported picture doesn't have an embedded clipping path? No problem for XPress 4.0. Open up the modify panel again and this time select 'non-white areas' in the clipping path type pulldown. Our telephone example doesn't have any non-white areas so there's no change. If it had been on a white background we'd get a result first time, but as it's on a kind of coffee stain backdrop we'll need to do a little work.



▲ Fig 1 USE THE CLIPPING TAB OF THE MODIFY PANEL SO AS TO CREATE A NEW CLIPPING PATH FOR THE IMAGE, BEFORE MOVING TO THE RUNAROUND TAB TO CONTROL YOUR TEXT FLOW

the last, threshold, which defines the level at which pixels are considered non-white. The default is zero, and anything with a value greater than that is non-white. By increasing the threshold you can treat light colours as white.

A threshold setting of 60 percent eliminates the entire background from the phone image, leaving only the phone and a little of the shadow at the front.

The Noise setting lets you ignore small clumps of stray pixels that you probably wouldn't want to include, such as dirt, wispy bits of hair or other small detail. Finally, smoothness removes some of the points on the path to give a smoother but less well-fitting edge. It's worth increasing this value from the default setting if you find that relatively straight lines or smooth curves end up with lots of nodes along them.

Using this method you can quickly and simply create cutouts in Quark without the need for detailed tracing in an image editing application. And, you can go even further. Take a look below the tolerance panel and you'll see three check boxes marked 'invert', 'outside edges only' and 'restrict to box'.

The tolerance panel provides three controls which will help us sort the wood from the trees, or in this case the phone from the coffee stain. The most useful is



◀ Fig 2 PRESS CTRL-SHIFT-F10 TO EDIT THE BEZIER CLIPPING PATH

Questions

& answers

Q Is it quite safe to use third-party cartridges in my inkjet printer? The manual says to use only those produced by the printer manufacturer, except these cost an absolute fortune. I have seen others which cost considerably less, as well as refill kits which work out cheaper still. Do these give the same results as the branded cartridges? And is there any risk that they might damage my printer, as suggested in the manual?

NEIL DYER

a Even though the price of photo-quality inkjet printers has tumbled in the past 12 months, the cost of the

cartridges has failed to follow suit. Given that you can now purchase a good quality A4 printer for less than £150 and considering that the cost of replacing the colour and black cartridges for that same printer is likely to be in the region of £30, it is not difficult to see where the money is being made.

In the first year of operation you might easily spend many times the initial cost of the printer on consumables. In my experience third-party cartridges pose little threat to your printer and give just as good results as those produced by the printer manufacturer.

I have compared results on an Epson Stylus Photo printer by printing the same file using an Epson branded cartridge and a third-party version — Colourjet — and it's impossible to tell the two

apart. Refill systems can be less reliable. Most use a syringe to top-up the ink chambers and this can be a messy business.

One system — Esselte's Inklink — uses an ink reservoir which attaches to the side of your printer and links through a tube to the original cartridge. Although it is unlikely that non-branded inks will do any damage, if you are at all anxious about it you can save almost as much money by shopping around for branded goods.

Advertisers in the back pages of this magazine typically sell cartridges for anything up to half the price you would pay in high street shops like Dixons and PC World. If you are willing to buy at least half a dozen at one time, you can get further discounts.

Q I want to produce a poster with our company's logo on it — a shield design — but when I blow it up, even to A4 size, it looks awful. Is there any way to enlarge it without losing quality?

DAVID GRIMWOOD

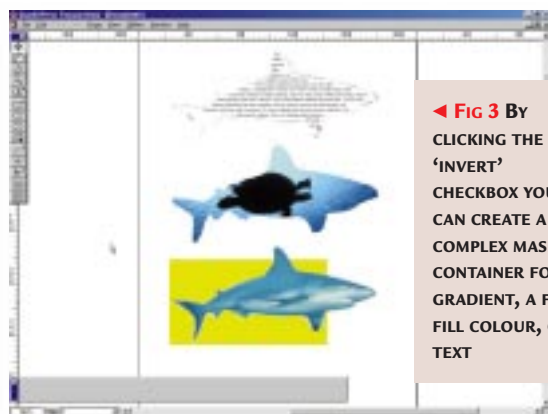
a Not if you keep it as a bitmap, because the bigger it gets, the lower the resolution will become. The best option is to convert it into a PostScript vector image and then you can go as big as you like with no change in quality. If you have CorelDraw you can import the image as a tif file and trace it off manually, using the Bezier tool. Alternatively, use Corel OCR trace to automate some of the process. As with all trace software you will have to do a bit of manual cleaning up afterwards.

Invert [Fig 3] turns your cutout into a transparent shape mask which displays whatever is behind the picture box. Used in this way, your cutout can act as a mask container for a fill colour, another image, or text. By unchecking the 'outside edges only' box, you can create complex paths with holes that need to be transparent, in this case [Fig 4] the area between the body of the telephone and the cable.

By unchecking 'restrict to box' you can move the subject outside the bounds of its container. If you're used to pictures remaining within their boxes, this can seem a little weird.

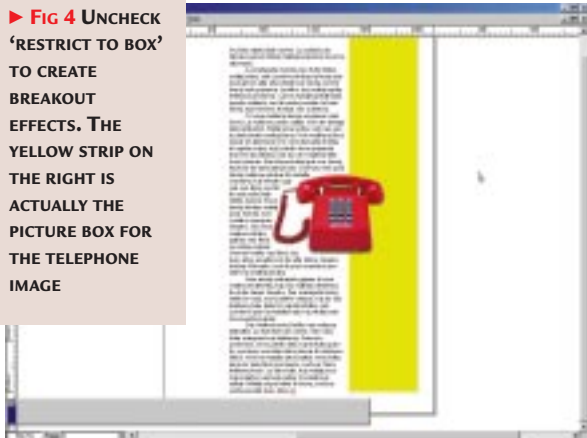
Using the content tool you can pick up the image and drag it outside its box. You can remove it completely, although some part of the image must always remain anchored to the box. This can be quite useful if you want the image to overlap the edge of a coloured background.

Lastly, you need to define how text runs around your cutout and this is carried



◀ Fig 3 By clicking the 'INVERT' checkbox you can create a complex mask container for a gradient, a flat fill colour, or text

► Fig 4 UNCHECK 'RESTRICT TO BOX' TO CREATE BREAKOUT EFFECTS. THE YELLOW STRIP ON THE RIGHT IS ACTUALLY THE PICTURE BOX FOR THE TELEPHONE IMAGE



out in the runaround tab of the modify panel. In most cases all you need to do is select 'same as clipping' in the type pulldown. This will cause the text to follow the outline of your clipped image.

Unless you specify an outset the type will extend right to the edge of the image, about 4pt-8pt works

well but it depends on the shape of the outline and the width of your columns. Don't confuse 'runaround outset', which moves the text away from the clipping path, with 'clipping outset' which adjusts the clipping path itself.

PCW CONTACTS

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