

Software Review: MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5

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In The Beginning...

It would be a disservice not to give a concise history of MultiAd's heritage and how its flagship software, Creator Desktop Professional, evolved. Unless you work in the newspaper industry, or are deeply rooted in the creative/agency side of business, you've probably never heard of a company known as "MultiAd." You probably have heard of their clients: The Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post, Bank of America, Mercedes-Benz, Lexus, Kia, and the Miami Herald to name a few.

Irrespective of whether the name is familiar to you, MultiAd has been a prestigious provider of advertising products and services since 1945. The "Creator" software franchise was born in 1989 as a Macintosh-based desktop publishing (DTP) application. MultiAd's intention was to make a user-friendly product which would facilitate the newspaper industry's advertising needs. Needless to say, MultiAd Creator proved to be an enormous success story. Creator is considered the software of choice for the newspaper industry, and is a highly regarded display-ad production tool as well. Incremental features and revisions were added through the years. Let's fast forward to the latest incarnation called MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5.

Creator Power to the People

There are two significant things to know about the all new MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5. First, it's now a cross-platform tool supporting the latest operating systems of both Windows (including XP), and Macintosh (including Jaguar 10.2). Second, the code has been freshly rewritten from the ground up. This is great news for Windows users. Due to the platform-independent code-base, Windows users reap the same benefits of ad production as their Mac user counterparts.

From the moment you launch MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5, you will notice useful niceties such as being greeted by the "New Document" dialog box. Here you will find a plethora of different templates for custom and miscellaneous layouts. It's all here including SAU, TMAU, US Paper, and International paper sizes to name a few. By the way, when creating a flyer or ad layout, wouldn't you like to include a sophisticated border with a click? Well, Creator includes about 300 pre-rendered borders in 20 categories for you! And, you can use these breathtaking borders with any square or rectangle by simply selecting the Border tool.

Easy, Intuitive Interface

Creator's legacy has been its uncomplicated and straightforward user-interface. After all, MultiAd's goal was to make this software as easy to use as possible. Let me give you an example how this tradition continues in version 6.5. Select the Starburst tool from the

tool palette. Double-clicking the Starburst tool brings up the “Starburst Info” dialog box. Here you can manipulate every aspect and attribute of your Starburst through four self-explanatory icons. The interface may be simple...but the power is intoxicating! Shadows with vertical and horizontal offsets, and almost certainly the best Gradient tool feature ever implemented in any software (I could write a separate review on this alone). Trapping options allow for knockout, choke, overprint and spread. It also sports custom textures and fills, frame types and weights, and control of rotation and skew. Plus, using the Reshape tool you can further tweak the Starburst by specifying the number of points, round off the valleys and peaks and choose to center or randomize your Starburst creation. And all that is just for your Starburst! Keyboard shortcuts for almost every function abound. For using any tool inside the Tool Palette, just tap the corresponding letter: T for text, O for oval, L for line...see, easy (this is called mouseless switching between tools).

The Power to Create

Let’s talk about typographical controls. Nobody beats MultiAd Creator in this category either. Remember, when a newspaper Display Ad goes to press, masterful control of type is required. Sometimes this need extends far beyond what a typical desktop publishing application can yield. Creator delivers in a big way. With a recipe of an on-screen “Text Specification” palette, combined with the awesome flexibility of the “Character Formatting” dialog box, there’s not a microscopic tweak of text Creator can’t achieve. By the way, a mouseless interface for adjusting variable text attributes has been added—no more fumbling through dialog boxes. Many prominent features make Creator a best in class choice. I love the flexibility of exporting my entire layout (or individual items) as EPS, GIF, JPEG, TIFF, PDF, or XML. Visual Basic is also scriptable and attachable for Windows users. Of course, the “Make Matrix” and “Magic Wand” tools deserve honorable mention as well.

Kick the Tires

Think I’m exaggerating? Go ahead and try the program out for yourself. Navigate to www.creatorsoftware.com, click on “Downloads” at the top and then select “Try.” It’s the complete program except that the Save function is disabled. MultiAd also sells a light version of Creator called MultiAd Creator Desktop for only \$99.00. Be sure to poke around www.muliad.com to learn how these products and services can possibly improve your business. MultiAd Creator was the best kept secret in publishing...sorry but somebody had to let the cat out of the bag!

Prices:

MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5 *Full* – \$750.00

MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5 *Upgrade from Creator 6.0* – \$99.00

MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5 *Upgrade from Creator2 edition* – \$149.00

MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5 *Upgrade from Creator 3.x edition* – \$249.00

MultiAd Creator Desktop 6.5 *Light Edition* – \$99.00

Windows Requirements for MultiAd Creator Desktop Professional 6.5:

- Intel Pentium II 300MHz or greater
- Win 98, Win ME, Win 2000, or Win XP
- 128 MB RAM
- CD-ROM
- Adobe Type Manager (ATM) included on CD

Note: Win 2000 & Win XP have ATM built-in