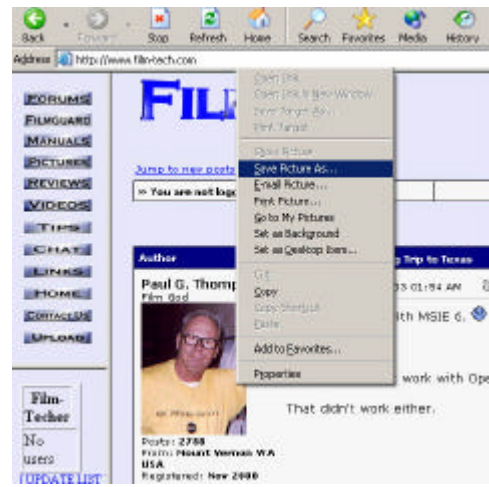# Animated GIFs with Photoshop 6 and ImageReady 3

Setting up the Photo for use

Prepare your file by loading the image you want to animate into Photoshop. In this example we will snag a forum member's photo … say Paul Thompson's. Right click on the photo and then choose "Save Picture As …" from the menu. Give it a name and save it in your "My Documents" folder.

Start Photoshop and open the file you just saved. We need to set up the file so that we can delete everything except Paul's head. In the Layers toolbox, right click on the Background layer and then select Duplicate Layer. Select OK for the name Background Copy.
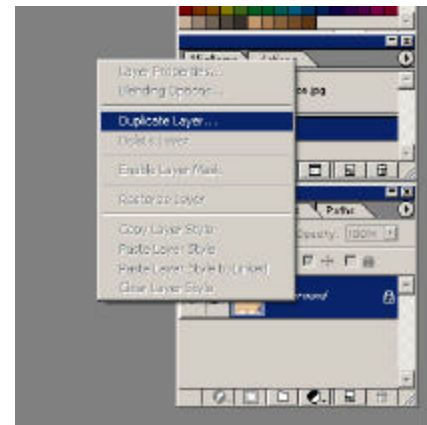
Now drag the original Background layer to the trash can at the bottom of the layers toolbox to delete it. Don't ask why we just did this.

Now we need to create a new background layer that is a solid color. Since we are going to make Paul's head spin, we need a solid background so that the entire image doesn't appear to spin.

Create the new layer by clicking the piece of paper at the bottom of the layers toolbox (it's next to the trashcan). This will create a new layer called Layer 1. Click on Layer 1 and drag it so that it's below the Background Copy layer. Your layer toolbox should look like the one to the right.
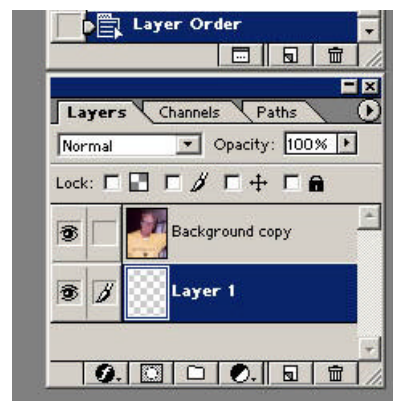
Cropping the Image

We just need Paul's head, so we're going to crop it out of the photo. Select the polygonal lasso tool from the toolbar. If it is not shown, hold down the lasso button and select the polygonal lasso from the popup menu.
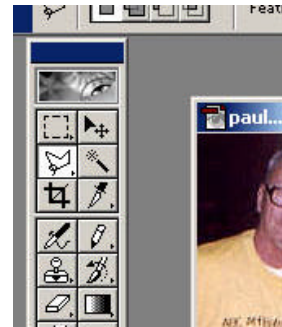
Now drag the lower right corner of the photo window to make the window bigger. Enlarge Paul's photo on the screen by pressing CTRL-+ twice to enlarge it to 300%. We need to be able to see the details we're selecting.

The polygonal lasso tool uses points to draw a selection guide around an item. Click on the Background Copy layer in the layer toolbox so that we are working on that layer. Now, we're going to click several points around the edge of Paul's head to select the outline. Don't forget his ears! You'll need to click about 20 points to outline his head.

Now we've selected the part we want to keep. Since we want to delete everything *except* Paul's head, we need to reverse the selection. From the menu, click on Select > Inverse. This will select everything except Paul's head. Press the DEL key, and the rest of the image disappears. Now press CTRL-D to clear the selection. You should now have an image that looks something like the one to the right.

Look at all of that extra space we have now. Let's get rid of some of that.

Choose the rectangular marquee tool from the toolbox. It looks like this:

Drag a selection box around Paul's head so that his head almost fills the box. Now choose Image > Crop from the menu and the image will be cropped to the size of the box you drew. If you don't get the right size box the first time, press CTRL-D to deselect the box and try again. Press CTRL-D when you're done to clear the selection.

Now we need to change the shape of the photo so that it is square. Otherwise, when we rotate Paul's head sideways, it will be cut off because the image isn't wide enough. Choose Image > Canvas size from the menu and make it so that the image is as wide as it is tall. In my case, the image was 53 pixels high and 69 pixels wide, so I'll change that 53 to a 69 and click OK to resize the image.

Let's add some color to that background before we go making the room spin. In the layer toolbox, click the Layer 1 layer to select where we want to be working.

In the toolbox, there are two colored boxes for your palette. The top box is the foreground color and the rear box is the background color. Click the background color box and choose a pretty color to place behind Paul's head. I've chosen white for mine.

Choose Edit > Fill from the menu. In the drop-down box, make sure Background Color is chosen and click OK. Now Paul's head is on a solid background.

Setting up the Animation Layers

Because animation frames will only remember a few attributes for each layer, we need to create a new layer of Paul's head for each position it will be in during the animation. Since we are spinning his head, we will need four positions. Therefore, we need to make three copies of the layer with his head and rotate them into different positions.
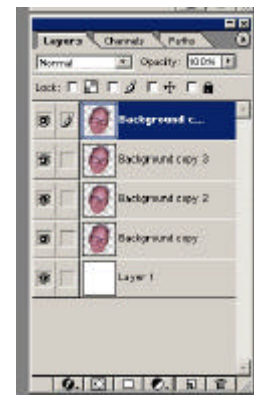
In the layers toolbox, select the Background Copy layer, which contains Paul's head. Now choose Layer > Duplicate Layer from the menu and click OK to accept the name Background Copy 2. Repeat to create Background Copy 3 and Background Copy 4. Your layers toolbox should now look something like the one at the right. Some layers may scroll below the bottom of the box, but that's okay.

Now that there are four copies of Paul's head, we need to rotate each layer into a different position in the animation. Click on the Background Copy 2 layer to work on that one.

To rotate the image in that layer, choose Edit > Transform > Rotate 90? CW to rotate that layer clockwise 90 degrees. You will see Paul's head on top of another copy of Paul's head that is sideways.
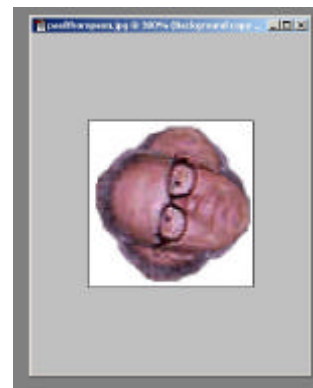
Click on Background Copy 3 and let's rotate that one 180 degrees. Click on Edit > Transform > Rotate 180? CW.

Click on Background Copy 4 and let's rotate that one into the last position. Click on Edit > Transform > Rotate 90? CCW. You should now see something like the image to the right.

Now we're done setting up the animation layers and can save the file and move onto the last few steps of the animation. Click File > Save As and make sure the format is "Photoshop" with a ".psd" filename extension. Now we're done with Photoshop.

Animating the file with Image Ready

The rest of the animation work will be carried out in Adobe Image Ready 3.0, so close the Photoshop application and start the Image Ready application. The program file should be located in the same directory that the Photoshop application is located.

Open the .psd file we just saved from Photoshop. You should see the image window appear with Paul's four heads and the layer toolbox should show four layers of Paul and the background layer that is whatever color you chose. Additionally there is now an animation toolbox at the bottom of the screen that should now be showing Frame 1 with the main image in it.
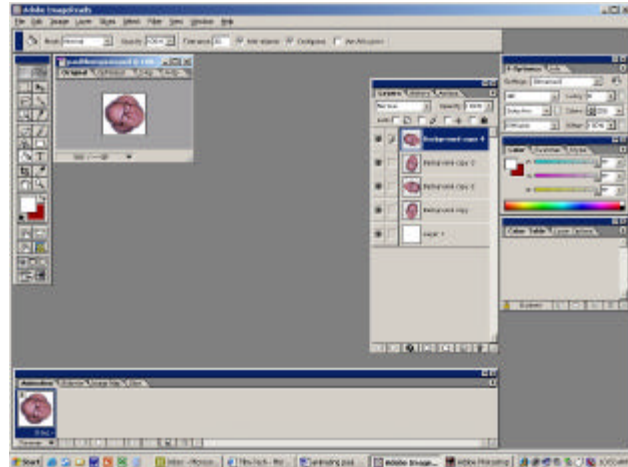
Using the layer toolbox, we will be selecting which layers appear in each frame. This is accomplished by turning on or off the eyeball next to each layer to determine whether the layer is visible or not. Let's start our animation with Frame 1 containing Background Copy. Turn off the eyeballs for Background Copy 2, 3 and 4. This should leave just Paul's head right side up.

There's Frame 1 completed.
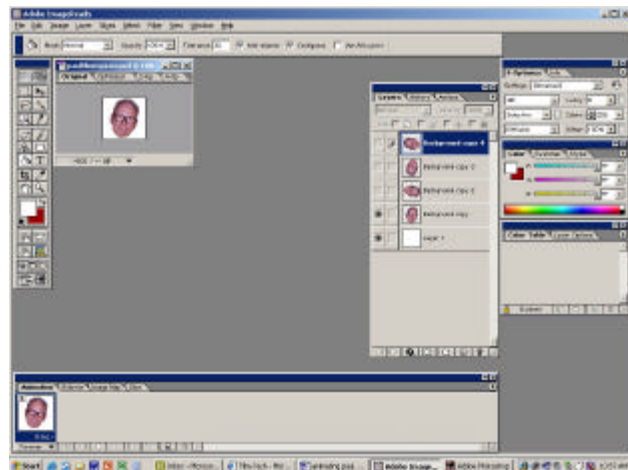
To create Frame 2, click the paper icon in the animation toolbox. Like before, it's located next to the trash can. This will create a new frame that is a duplicate of Frame 1.

In this frame, we want to display the next point in the animation, which is on the layer called Background Copy 2. So click the eyeballs in the layer toolbox and make Background Copy invisible and Background Copy 2 visible.
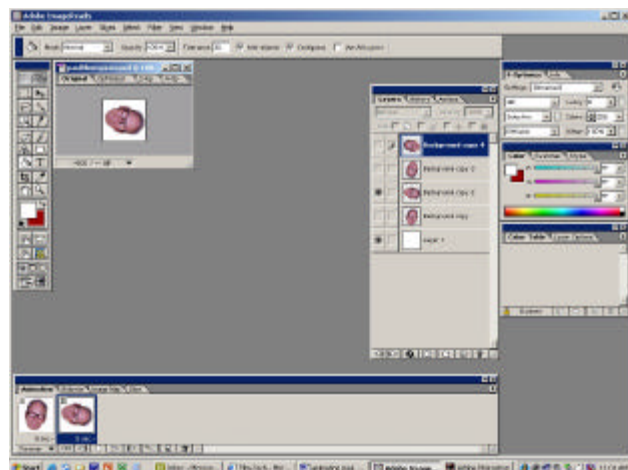
Repeat these last two steps to create Frame 3 and change which layers are visible in it and then again to create Frame 4. You should now have something like the image below.
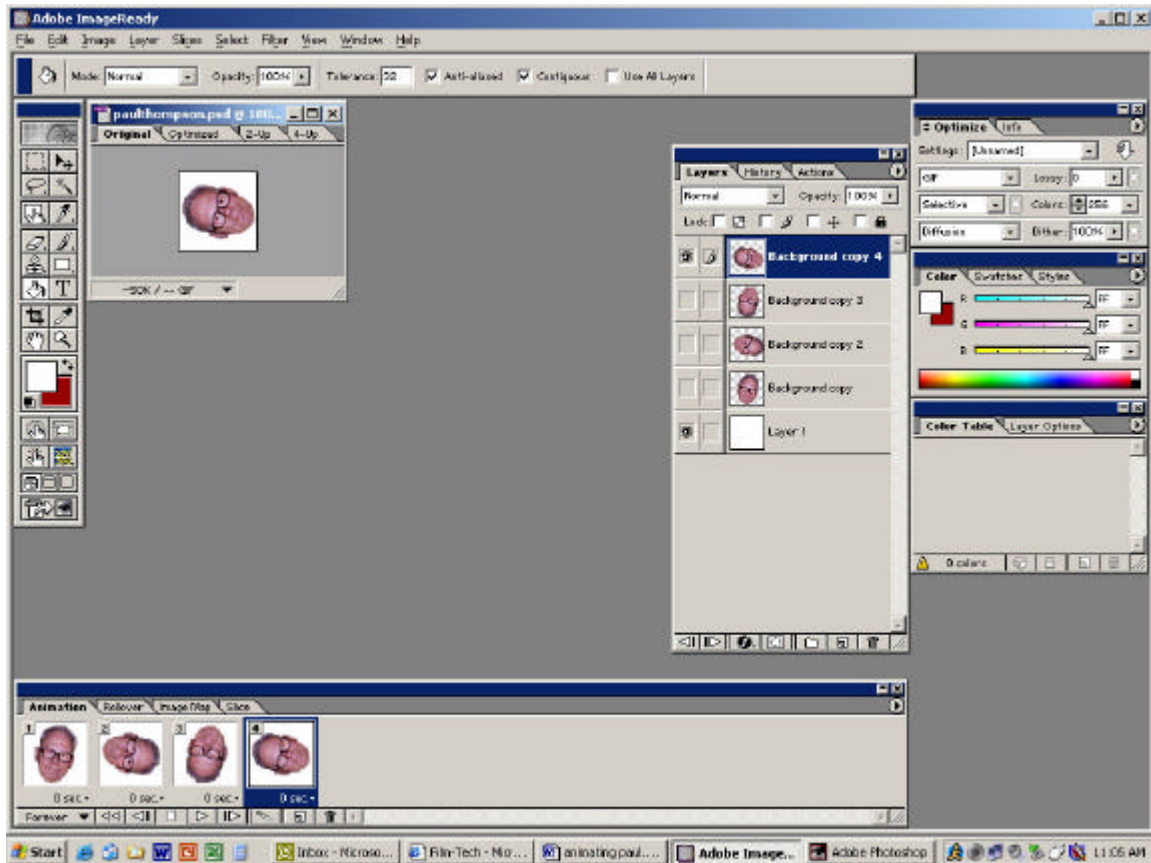
The last step is to set the timing of the animation. We need to tell it how long each frame is to appear before it proceeds to the next frame. In the animation toolbox, there is a timing drop-down below each frame. Right now they are set to 0 sec. Click on that and change each one to 0.2 seconds. Now you can press the play button in the animation toolbox and see what your animation will look like (although it will play back a little bit slower than what will actually come out when completed). Click the stop button when you're dizzy.

Let's save what we've done by clicking on File > Save in the menu.

Now we're ready to convert the Image Ready file into an animated gif that can be used on web pages.

From the menu, click on File > Save Optimized As. Agree to the file name after verifying that the file type is ".gif" and you're done!

Now you can open Internet Explorer and open the .gif file to see your finished work. Make sure you upload the .gif file to the Film-Tech forums for everyone to see!