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## DeBabelizer 3 speaks Mac users' languages

By: Sean Wagstaff

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By **Sean Wagstaff**

DeBabelizer has been quietly successful for many years because of the loyalty of the most technically minded graphics users. But the latest edition of Equilibrium's graphics toolbox will win many new fans, particularly among print and Web publishers.

The \$599.95 DeBabelizer 3.0 (\$400 street price) offers a better interface, far more powerful scripting and support for a number of new graphics formats - including animated GIF and CMYK - that bring the total to more than 100. These changes improve the application across the board and are likely to establish it as a mainstream workhorse.

DeBabelizer 3 borrows many interface elements from last year's DeBabelizer Pro for Windows, but DeBabelizer 3 for the Mac is a substantially different product from the Windows version (see sidebar, next page).

Like DeBabelizer Toolbox 1.6.5, released several years ago for the Mac, DeBabelizer 3 is designed to automate virtually all the tedious tasks of bit-map image processing, such as reducing color palettes and translating folders of images. Everything in DeBabelizer is scriptable, and you can easily combine any number of operations into a script. Scripts also can be included in other scripts and controlled through the new Batch Automation palette, which can run a script as part of a larger objective, such as cataloging or translating images. Version 3 shipped with a number of Batch Automation bugs, but a patch posted by Equilibrium fixed those problems. The fix should be available on the company's Web site by the time you read this.

Foremost among the new features is a greatly improved interface. As before, a Scripting window allows you to place any DeBabelizer command in a script by



recording a sequence of commands or by selecting commands from menus, but scripts and Batch Lists now take advantage of Macintosh Drag and Drop. You can drag images, folders and disks onto Batch Lists to add them or drag them onto scripts to process them. Scripts can be dragged onto open images or onto Batch Lists.

While some of DeBabelizer's old interface lingers in its deep dialog boxes, most functions are simplified and benefit greatly from the capability to preview the effect of operations and scripts, and you can now open an unlimited number of images at once. There is only so much sugar you can sprinkle over the complexities of graphics file formats before it impedes efficiency, and we think the company has done an admirable job of balancing objectives.

DeBabelizer 3 is an outstanding tool for Web designers. You can place a URL in a Batch List, for example, and DeBabelizer will download and process all the images on selected pages linked to that Web site. It will even build a catalog of thumbnails as image files with corresponding HTML image maps for making clickable catalogs. The program now supports PNG and FlashPix file formats. (Windows BMP, Scitex CT and Sony Playstation formats are other important additions.)

The Animated GIF Writer is sorely in need of frame optimization, and Equilibrium said it would add this in its next patch. DeBabelizer supports QuickTime 3.0, which indirectly accesses new formats such as Digital Video via compressor-decompressors. DeBabelizer completes its bit-map multilingualism through third-party Adobe Photoshop Import, Export and Acquire plug-ins, which drive digital cameras and scanners and juggle some seldom-seen file formats.

DeBabelizer always offered scripting, but its new conditional statements, such as Loop, If, Else and While, provide far greater control over scripts. Almost every aspect of an image, such as its size, bit depth, file type or name, can be used as a variable, which lets you build powerful decision-making processes into scripts. It's easy to export scripts as AppleScripts, and you can modify these to create image processing systems with virtually unlimited program control and connections to tools like FileMaker Pro and Canto Software Inc.'s Cumulus.

DeBabelizer now converts images between RGB and CMYK formats using Apple's ColorSync, and profiles are readily incorporated into scripts. This makes DeBabelizer a powerful tool for print shops and print designers, who can generate different CMYK files for proofing devices and printing presses in one script.

Although DeBabelizer 3 is a tremendous improvement, it has a few flaws. Its animation support remains clumsy, GIF export is not yet optimized, and early adopters will need to download a bug fix.

But these are quibbles compared with the overall functionality of DeBabelizer: It lets anyone build custom graphics processing tools via scripts and apply them in a fast, efficient manner. We're hard-pressed to think of another software product that offers as much flexibility and time-saving power and as many effects to such a wide swath of core Mac users. No professional site that works with graphics files should be without it.

Equilibrium of Sausalito, Calif., can be reached at (415) 332-4343 or (800) 584-8651; fax (415) 332-4433; <http://www.equilibrium.com>.

Equilibrium

List price: \$599.95\*

Hits: Conditional scripting; drag-and-drop interface; excellent Web support; support for CMYK, QuickTime 3.0 and Photoshop plug-ins.

Misses: Animation interface; GIF frame optimization.

\*Street price, \$400; upgrades from DeBabelizer Toolbox 1.6.5, \$149.95.

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