
Windows Draw 5.0

Now that you've had a chance to use Windows Draw!, you'll be interested to learn about the latest version of this application – Windows Draw 5.0. Here's what we said in *PC Plus*.

Value for money

By the far the most impressive thing about Windows Draw 5.0 is its value for money. You get an upgraded version of the popular Draw product, a 3D module (inherited from Visual Reality when Micrografx bought the company in April), a powerful photo editor and manipulator, and MediaManager (although that didn't work properly in this beta). All for £39 – which is far cheaper than anything else on the market.

But Micrografx hasn't compromised on features or functionality to achieve this value for money. In fact, you get a lot more in this package than you get in many others costing twice or three times as much.

Instant 3D module

The Instant 3D module is the biggest single addition to this version and offers photo-realistic text and images. There are several hundred materials, textures, and lighting and shading effects to choose from, which will significantly enhance the look of any document you create.

Micrografx claims to have the fastest and most powerful rendering engine on the market – and it's certainly far more powerful, and a lot

Version 5.0

faster than anything else you're going to find in this price bracket. It will also support Microsoft's Direct 3D when the final version of the software is ready.

Creating a 3D object is as simple as drawing or choosing the shape you want (there are hundreds of pre-drawn shapes to choose from), choosing the material you want the shape to be made from, then the texture, and finally any shading or lighting effects. And it's all done through a simple drag and drop routine.

Other additions

Other major additions include the hundreds of Wizards the company has added to make creating documents as easy as possible. There are now also 20,000 pieces of clip-art (with 5,000 brand new ones), 250 fonts, over 50 filters (enabling you to import and export almost any file type, and an effects browser. Again, these are all driven by a simple drag and drop routine.

There's a new opening screen designed to make it easier to see exactly what you are able to do as soon as the software is loaded. There's also a 'tip of the day' à la most of the Microsoft products. This is either tremendously useful or incredibly patronising, depending on your point of view and the level of your experience. You can disable this feature if you wish, though.

Also new is a mail merge feature, which you can use to print address labels (all the Paper Direct and Avery label types are supported). The software will also take you step-by-step through printing envelopes, which can be extremely frustrating if you're not familiar with how to load specific envelopes into your printer to get the address printed in the right place.

Watch out, Corel?

Micrografx's pedigree in the PC industry is as long as any company's – in fact, it's one of the oldest of the old guard. It was the first with a Windows Draw package, and quickly committed itself to being a Windows-only shop. All this experience shows in this new Micrografx product. It is fast, neat, and easy to use.

Corel had better watch out – especially as it seems to have taken its eye of the graphics ball lately, what with all the attention it's paying to the software suite market at the moment.