

Mirage

COLLABORATORS

	<i>TITLE :</i> Mirage		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>SIGNATURE</i>
WRITTEN BY		February 12, 2023	

REVISION HISTORY

NUMBER	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NAME

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Chapter 1

Mirage

1.1 Mirage - Anim to ANSI by Robert Ennals

Mirage v1.0 by Robert Ennals

Produced by NFA

To bitmap animation to ANSI converter

[Introduction](#)

[Programmer](#)

[Registration](#)

[Restrictions](#)

[Usage](#)

[Hints](#)

[Troubleshooting](#)

[Installation](#)

[Distribution](#)

[NFA](#)

Other programs by Robert Ennals

[Text Processor](#)

[CPU Check](#)

[Breakdown 2](#)

Future Programs

Power Workbench

This archive contains the bare program. It does not contain the example files. The example files are available in a separate archive.

1.2 Mirage - Introduction

What it does

Mirage converts bitmap animations in IFF format into ANSI animations.

The ANSI output that it creates is highly optimised and can be edited in ANSI animation editors such as ProANSI.

At the time of writing Mirage is the only bitmap animation to ANSI animation converter available on any machine. No doubt other programmers will try to copy it.

Before Mirage was released the only way to create ANSI animations was to use an action recorder from an ANSI editor. This simply recorded all your actions (eg goto position and type character). Unfortunately it was very hard to produce anything good with this method and so ANSI animations were usually very bad.

Not only is Mirage the only program that can convert bitmap animations to ANSI (at time of writing), but Mirage can also convert single images into ANSI files, better than most dedicated single image to ANSI converters.

You will have to do several things in order to convert your animation into a format that can be converted into an ANSI animation.

Save it in the correct animation format

Remap it to a suitable colour palette

Scale it to the correct resolution

Relevant topics

How to use Mirage

1.3 Input animation format

Input Format

Mirage loads animations in the form of sequences of IFF ILBM images. These images must share a common stem and be followed by a three digit number to show which frame they are.

For example;

stem = animation

frame 1 = animation001

frame 2 = animation002

Sequences of pictures in this format are very easy to create. To create such a sequence in Deluxe Paint for example you just select Picture/Save and enter the range that you wish to save.

If you wish to convert a single image then simply save it as an IFF.

Mirage recognises whether the selected IFF image is a single image or part of an animation.

1.4 The ANSI colour palette

The ANSI colour palette

There are two ways that Mirage can convert colours to ANSI

1. Directly remap colours

ANSI graphics use an eight colour palette. This palette should have been included in the archive that Mirage came in under the name "ANSI.col" or "ANSI.palette". For an animation to display with the correct colours under ANSI, you must remap your animation to this palette. Consult your manual to learn how to do this in your software. Direct remapping of colours can be done in High resolution (80x46) or low resolution (80x23).

2. Remap colours to coloured characters

Mirage can remap up to 32 different colours to ANSI characters. Each colour can be remapped to any character, with a background colour and a foreground colour. Some of the characters in the IBM extended character set can be used to create dither effects and thus create wonderful shaded animations and images.

Remap tables are defined in the [Options](#) .

Only low resolution (80x23) images can be remapped in this way. This is because high resolution(80x46) is synthesised from low resolution using some of the IBM extended characters.

1.5 The ANSI resolution

The ANSI resolution

ANSI is an extension to the ASCII text format. It is just like a normal text file except that it contains codes for changing background and foreground colour and for jumping to a position on the screen.

Most ANSI terminals display ANSI in a 80x23 character window. Some low quality still image to ANSI programs convert graphics at this resolution, but Mirage uses special characters in the IBM extended character set to double the vertical resolution to create a vertical resolution of 80x46 characters.

Only the top left 80x46 pixel area of each image will be converted to ANSI. Make sure that you scale your animations and images so that they fit into this area.

1.6 Using Mirage

When you first load Mirage you should be presented with the main screen. This has several information areas and buttons. This is what they all are:

Information - Various information, and progress reports

Input filename - The filename of the first frame of the sequence
(single frames can also be converted)

Output filename - the name of the ANSI file to save

Start - Starts the conversion process

More - Takes you to the options screen

Help - Brings up this AmigaGuide help file

Quit - Quits Mirage

Related topics

Options

Input animation format

Features

1.7 The options screen

To get to the Options screen click on the "More" button from the main screen.

On the options screen there are several options that you can set.

Transparency mask

Mask from .mask

PC CR/LF

Hires

32 colour remap

Extended set

Grab Palette

Load - Loads Preferences

Save - Saves Preferences

Use - Uses preferences and returns to the main screen

At the top of the screen is a display of the 32 colours in the currently selected palette. This display is purely for reference purposes when defining the **remap table** .

The table of data to the left is the **remap table** .

When 32 colour remap is turned on, this data is used to define what each colour is remapped to.

1.8 Features of Mirage

Features of Mirage

Conversion of sequences of bitmap images to an ANSI animations

Heavy optimisation of ANSI output

Utilises the IBM extended character set

User defined remapping of up to 32 colours to ANSI

Synthesis of high resolution (80x46) graphics from 80x23 text

Transparency through to previous images

Masking of data with an Alpha channel

PC format ANSI save mode

1.9 Grab Palette

This option lets you grab a palette from an IFF ILBM image. This palette is then displayed at the top of the options screen to use as a reference when creating a **remap table**.

The palette has no effect on the ANSI file produced by Mirage.

1.10 Transparency

Mirage lets you add transparency to an animation. This is useful for displaying your animation over what is there before. For example you might want to use transparency to wipe from one menu to another.

The basis for the transparency is the first image of the sequence. Only pixels that are different to the first frame will be drawn.

Due to the nature of ANSI, once a pixel has been overwritten you cannot expose the previous graphics again.

To turn transparency on, select the tick box on the options screen.

Related topics

[Alpha channel masking](#)

1.11 32 colour ANSI remapping

Mirage can remap up to 32 colours to any character from the IBM extended character set, with a background and foreground colour.

What character each colour remaps to is defined by editing a table on the options screen. The data is arranged in several columns.

- The register number of the colour to be remapped

B - The background colour

F - The foreground colour

Char - the character

To change any colour or character simply click on it.

Colours are changed using a pop up gadget. To select a colour, hold down the left mouse button and release it when the pointer is above the colour you want. You have a choice of eight colours for the background and sixteen for the foreground.

To select a character, simply click on the character to change and then click on the character you want.

For character remapping to work, you must have it turned on and have Hires turned off. Both of these can be set from the options screen.

Colour to character remapping isn't just useful for representing colours. It can also be used as a way to represent special characters like borders in an IFF ILBM. With a bit of practice, quite good effects can be produced this way.

1.12 The IBM extended character set

Mirage allows you to use any character from the IBM extended character set in your ANSI files. You may find that your ANSI files don't load properly into some older ANSI editors that do not support this character set. I recommend that you use the ProANSI editor.

You may notice that you are unable to turn the IBM extended character set off. This is because I found a bug with some versions of the diskfont library. The option to turn off the extended character set and use the standard Amiga set should be available in future versions.

1.13 Masking of data

Mirage allows you to mask out sections of your ANSI animation or file so that they never display.

This function is very useful if you want to produce frames smaller than the normal sizes of 80x23 or 80x46 (Hires). It is also useful if you want to keep part of the display of a bulletin board the same all the time.

The mask is taken from a file with the same name as the stem, but with the extension ".mask". Any ".iff" extension is lost.

For example

First frame name Mask name

anim001 anim.mask

my_picture my_picture.mask

piccy.iff piccy.mask

The mask file should be a 2 colour (one bitplane) IFF ILBM image. The colour 0 blocks the the display and the colour 1 allows it.

1.14 Converting Animations to the correct format

To convert a bitmap animation to an ANSI animation you must first do the following

Save it in the correct animation format

Remap it to the ANSI eight colour palette

Scale it to the correct 80x46 resolution

1.15 Hints for getting good results

Here are several things that you should try with Mirage.

Wipes

Cartoons

Signatures

1.16 Creating Wipes with Mirage

When converting animations to ANSI format Mirage will only update characters if they change. This means that you can produce wipes between ANSI screens without using up huge amounts of disk space or causing them to take an age to draw.

Try using dedicated wipe creators such as Adorage to create wonderful wipes and then convert them to ANSI with Mirage.

1.17 Creating Cartoons with Mirage

Cartoons can work wonderfully with Mirage, as they look good with only eight colours and a low resolution.

Simply create your full cartoon animation with a program such as Deluxe Paint or Personal Paint and convert it. Text for speech bubbles can then be added with an ANSI editor such as the brilliant ProANSI.

Cartoon animations can really brighten up a dull BBS.

Other programs by me include the incredible Breakout style game

Breakdown 2

Here is a list of it's features

Interesting blocks - with functions like turning the screen upside down

Scrolling the screen sideways and

repelling the ball from the bat.

Variable speed - Vary the speed from very slow to impossibly fast.

Level Editor - Design your own levels with their own blocks and own speeds.

Help - A full hypertext help system

Definable music - Load any "Tracker" style module.

Challenge mode - Select a level and a speed and try to beat the previous high score for that level.

Positions saved - All positions are saved onto the Breakdown disk.

Whenever you complete a level, that will be added to the list of levels you can jump straight to.

Ask your local PD or Shareware library for "Breakdown 2" by Robert Ennals.

1.21 CPU Check

||_|| Check

|_ | |

CPU Check is a little utility that speaks or makes a noise when a task has finished.

You might for example tell it to inform you when your computer had finished printing a document so you could see how it has done or load more paper.

This is likely to become one of your most commonly used utilities.

CPU Check can be found in many PD libraries and BBSs. If you can't find it then send £5 \$10 or equivalent, together with an SAE and disk or your email address to me, the [Programmer](#) .

1.22 Text Processor by Robert Ennals

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Text Processor by Robert Ennals

Text processor is a collection of text processing utilities
by Robert Ennals.

It is the Ultimate ASCII text processing utility. There is no other
utility like it on any machine. It can take in text of any type and
process in over 15 different ways.

Here are just some of the operators it has

Add Space

Join single lines

Shorten Lines

Double to Single return

Single to Double return

TAB to Space

Remove ASCII 13 (CR)

Add ASCII 13 (CR)

Capitalise

Check Parenthesis

Indent to Return

Remove Indent

Quote Converter

Postscript Extract

Autocorrect

It can convert ANY form of ASCII text into ANY other format.

It is available everywhere including the Aminet.

1.23 Future Programs - Power Workbench

Power Workbench - a Workbench replacement

What Workbench would be now if C= hadn't had their problems

Don't expect this too soon as it will take me ages!

Features

File windows

Central window allows following listings

Devices

Assigns

Applications (aliases to common programs)

Minimisations (minimised windows)

Screens

Viewing methods

Icon + name

Icon

Uniform Icon size (set size for clean view)

Name

Tree

Tree + uniform icon

Pop across (like menu structure)

Icons

Stored in one quick reference file for a directory

Can be set to use a default icon

Uses special icons (supplied in several preset formats)

Options

Right mouse button

File - default actions (from suffix)

Window - sets preferences

and many other uses

Archive drivers allow user to access contents of archives

Aliases

Virtual programs and virtual drawers containing them

Easy for a program to set itself up as a virtual drawer (ARexx)

Different icons run programs with different

tooltipe settings

parameters

home directories (and thus preferences files)

Multiple screens

Never get overcrowded again

Window for dragging things between them

Can run in tandem with normal Workbench for compatibility with very

old, badly coded programs

1.24 Troubleshooting

Q: Why do my ANSI animations look worse than the original?

A: It's unavoidable as ANSI is really only designed for text.

Q: Why does the output from Mirage display wrong on my ANSI editor?

A: Some lower quality editors either don't support the control codes that Mirage uses, don't support animation or don't support the extended IBM font. Use the ProANSI editor. It works perfectly with Mirage.

Q: I have registered, but Mirage doesn't notice the keyfile. Why?

A: Keyfiles must be placed in your S: drawer.

Q: Mirage is unregistered and seems to freeze. Why?

A: The unregistered version does this to persuade you to register.

If you register this pause will no longer be present.

Q: When I save my ANSI file after editing it with an ANSI editor, some of the data is lost. What can I do?

A: Use ProANSI instead.

Q: Why am I getting garbage at the edges of my converted image?

A: You may have loaded an image smaller than 80x50. The garbage is unavoidable with incorrectly sized images as Mirage doesn't know what colour to have pixels that don't exist

Q: Why won't HELP work?

A: The help file (this one) must be in the directory pointed to by the Mirage: assign.

If your problem is not addressed here then contact me for help.

[How to contact me](#)

1.25 Registration

In order to continue producing programs like Mirage I need money.

The unregistered version of Mirage has a thirty second pause before startup and will add a registration message to the end of all files. If you register I will send you a personal keyfile. If this is placed in your S: directory, Mirage will not pause or add messages.

To register Mirage send me £10 \$20 or equivalent.

I can be contacted in the following ways;

Write to 19 Belgrade Road

Hampton

Middx

TW12 2AZ

England

Email Ennals@kingston.ac.uk

100534.1464@compuserve.com

Send all email to both addresses and state Mirage in the subject

When I receive payment, I will create a personal registration keyfile for you. I will send this to you by Email (UUencoded, no PGP) or with an SAE and disk sent by you. When this file is placed in the S: directory, you will no longer have to wait before processing files, and messages will not be appended to your files.

1.26 Restrictions of the unregistered version

The unregistered version of Mirage has several restrictions

1. It pauses for 30 seconds before starting up
2. It adds a message to the end of all files

To avoid these restrictions you must {"Register" LINK REGISTER}.

1.27 Installing Mirage

Installing Mirage is very easy.

1. Copy all the Mirage files to the destination directory
2. Copy the contents of the fonts drawer into your FONTS: directory.
3. Assign MIRAGE: to the Mirage home directory

To make the assign simply type "Assign Mirage:" followed by the directory path.

For example

Assign Mirage: Work:Graphics/Mirage

You should also add a line to make this assign to your user-startup file in your S: directory.

1.28 Distribution

This program can only be distributed in the archive it originally came in, with no files altered. If you want to add any additional files then both this archive and those file should be placed in another archive.

Any PD library or Bulletin board can distribute the original archive.

If this program is distributed commercialy, (for example on a magazine coverdisk or a CD) the author must be notified on or before the release date. My permission is not needed, but I must be informed.

1.29 The NFA group

Mirage was produced by NFA.

NFA is a group of programmers and Buletin Boards that write and distribute software, magazines and other things.

Recent versions of NFA programs including this one and others by Robert Ennals can be found on the NFA boards and on the Aminet (later).

Here are some of the NFA BBS numbers:

THE BIG HARD ONE oO-NFA WHQ-Oo 0116 2661610
DOWN AND OWT oO-NFA UKHQ-Oo ASK AN ELITE
BUGGED OUT oO-NFA MAIL-Oo 0116 2375147
CHAOTIC BLISS oO-NFA DIST-Oo ASK FOR IT!!
8-8 EVERYNIGHT

The boards with no numbers given are restricted to use by serious users
(ie no leachers).

Neither NFA nor Robert Ennals can be held responsible for the contents,
quality, or reliability of these boards. These are private boards run
by private individuals who happen to belong to the NFA group.

1.30 Dummy node

Avoids a bug in early versions of the Amigaguide library that can cause
problems in the last node.

1.31 ???

Well done, you have found the secret AmigaGuide node!

As your reward you have the opportunity to register Mirage for the
incredibly low price of £10 or \$20. Wow!