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Link to my home page

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A report outlining the progress of the Flash assignment themed Nostalgia Trip

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Summary

This report is a very simple list of instructions on how the project “Nostalgia Trip” was completed. Learning new skills as they were needed.

Introduction

Create a Virtual Movie Theatre that can be accessed from my home page, that loads the choice of 3 movies via on screen Remote Control.

To get this project finished there were 2 main skills learnt within Flash and number of supporting skills, plus a demonstration of more usual skills that are common to types of web page development.

The main Flash skills were *Motion Tweening* and *loading a movie* using *Action Script* which included creating a *button symbol.*

The other supplementary supporting skills included *Setting up* of the working area, using Flash conventions such as *Library, Stage, Movie* and naming conventions such as *instance name* and *button name,* plus using *Laye*rs to keep items or "movies" separate
The other more common skills of web designers, Preparation of images in Fireworks, Adding hyper links to images and buttons, Editing HTML , Uploading files using FTP software (FileZilla) and Testing.

The finished result of the Virtual Movie Theatre can be accessed through my personal webpage.

http://www.cems.uwe.ac.uk/~mfrancis

Look for the yellow Theatre entrance at the top of the page.

Methodology

Before starting this project I made sure that I had completed and understood the 2 tutorial exercises that were on the main 2 Flash Skills.
Then I went through each point within the project brief systematically ticking off as I went. I made a new folder called “completed work” and saved things there while preparing items in Fireworks until they were needed when I started to use Flash.
Most of the work was completed at home with just the uploading and testing done at UWE. I tested the movies I had created throughout the development process, then uploaded the finished design to my personal web page.

Theatre Door
I resized the theate_door.png in fireworks to 240x180 pixels and resaved it as a jpeg in a new folder “completed work”.

The Audience
I searched Google for some cinema audience cartoon figures and exported them into Fireworks. Each figure was cropped until I had 7 different characters. Using gridlines I estimated their correct size needed to be 60x60 pixels. In addition as the images needed to be silhouettes without backgrounds, I saved them as GIFs.

Next I followed this editing process for all seven images:

1. Erased the area around them – *Eraser tool*.
2. Took the colour away from the canvass.
3. Using the *Optimise panel*
4. Converted to GIF
4. Index Transparency
5. Remove colour from transparency
6. Saved as GIF,
7. Edited Filename “man3” who has a side profile, so that he had a back profile too. Filename “manback”

I then opened up FLASH CS3 to “install” the audience and give them some movement until the movie starts.

I opened up filename “movie_theatre.png”. I imported each audience member to the library.
Then went through a repeated process as follows bearing in mind the layer order with the audience needing to be in front of the curtains but behind the remote.

1. Made a new *layer* and gave it an appropriate name
2. Clicked on the first frame, made it a key frame
3. Dragged an audience member on to the stage, checked size and position
4. In *Properties, Tween* drop down click *Motion*.
5. Moved a few frames on, made it a *key frame*, checked that the *Tween* said Motion
6. Moved the audience member a bit
7. Back to 5 and repeat until got to the end.

Repeated this process for each audience member on 2 rows of seats.

Self Criticism - The audience figures should be a shade darker and not have a white outline. Andrew King said that had I used PNGs this would not have happened.

Buttons for remote

I measured up the approximate size for the buttons and decided that 80x25pixels would be appropriate because just like the audience I brought gridlines on to the stage and this appeared to be appropriate without obscuring too much.

I opened up Fireworks

1. First button filled with a red fill from styles, Typed MANICS as PNG and JPEG for upstate
2. Changed colour to Orange for *Over state*, saved again
3. Changed colour to Green for the *Down state*. Saved again.
4. Typed the word "MANICS" on the button.
5. Used the Edit-Find and Replace to do the same button for OASIS and PULP.

Saved each button.

In Flash (English,2006 pages 100-104)

1. Brought them into the Library
2. Gave them their own Layer
3. Insert – New Symbol gave the new scene the corresponding button image for *UP, OVER, DOWN* and *HIT*. x 3 buttons
4. Once saved brought the new button symbols onto the stage and added to Action Script to them to load the movies.

But before adding the Action Script to make them work I had to work out the position of the frame where the Movies would load.
Then simply used the code from the tutorial. (Flash MX 2004 Tutorial)

Self Criticism - I actually miscalculated and in the final result the movies load 1 pixel to right too far. So I need to take 1 pixel off the x axis in the Action Script code.

The Remote

I created the remote from scratch using Fireworks, using the current iPhone for inspiration. The size of 130pixels high x 240 wide seemed appropriate not to obscure the audience and screen.

I built a rounded rectangle with black fill, bevelled edge, small screen at the top and added some noise to the fills to give it some texture.

The Curtains

The curtains were provided so no work needed in Fireworks.

In FLASH

Exactly the same process as given for the Audience only with 2 motion tweens (for the curtains that move the most, inner 4)
Plus an additional characteristic called "ease"

1 To give the curtains the appearance of being connected to a track and all made from the same piece of cloth the outer pieces (R2,R1, L1,L2) move slowly and then speed up when the inner pieces approaches them. Negative *ease*.
2. In the last frame before the *Keyframe* with some Positive *ease* which makes the curtains come to a stop gradually rather than an abrupt halt.
3. The Action script command "stop();" was added to the end *Keyframe* to prevent the action looping indefinitely. One for each curtain layer.

The Exits – Left and Right (English,2006)

In Flash

In the last keyframe on the timeline, on the stage over the glowing red exit signs these invisible buttons sit.

1. Gave them names "exit left" and "exit right"
2. From the main menu – *window* – open *Behaviours* panel
3. Add *New Behaviour – Web* and insert my home page with open in Blank so that it would open a new browser window rather than get stuck in the frame page that was provided by Barry Dean ndex

Upload

I uploaded the swf & HTML files to my public folder using FileZilla.
I checked the HTML file viewport loaded the correct swf file and tested the link from my home page.
All worked first time.

Conclusions

Before starting this project I knew only that Flash exists and that it looked a bit complicated.
Hopefully now I have demonstrated that I have grasped the two main skills of *Motion Tweening* and Loading a Movie using Action Script.
Despite the fact the rather a lot of more resources were provided than probably was intended.

If I was to do a similar project in the future I would:-
Use PNGs instead of GIFs
Be more careful calculating the position of the movies I was loading.

Bibliography

English, J (2006) Flash 8 Training from the Source, Macromedia Publishing