What's New in GIMP 2.2

NEXT STEPS

The GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP) is often called the premium open source image manipulation project. Version 2.0 was released in February 2004, and now GIMP 2.2 is available. This article looks at GIMP's progress over the past year. **BY ROMAN JOOST**

For the major release of GIMP 2.0, the GIMP developers [1] basically rewrote the program. The new structure was designed to provide a framework that would bring more efficiency to ongoing development work. With GIMP 2.2, the GIMP developers have been able to harvest the first fruits of all that hard work with an improved GUI and new plugins.

Installation

As of this writing, even many of the most recent distributions do not include GIMP 2.2. You'll find a binary package with Suse Linux 9.1. If you use another distribution, you will need to build the GIMP from the source code, and this means you will need the libraries listed in Box 1. You can obtain GIMP 2.2 from the GIMP website at [1].

After installing the libraries in Box 2, you can unpack the GIMP source code, which is stored in the *gimp-2.2.0.tar.bz2* archive. Change to the *gimp-2.2.0* directory, and type the *./configure* command, and then type *make* to build the program. You need to *su* to *root* for the next step, which is installing the GIMP with the *make install* command.

When you first launch the GIMP, by typing *gimp-2.2*, a setup wizard appears, asking you if you would like to keep your Version 2.0 settings or redo the configuration.

Polished Interface

The main window structure has hardly been changed for the new version, although the developers have reworked the dialogs and toolboxes based on the Gnome Human Interface Guidelines [2]. The guidelines were designed by the Gnome project to help programmers create user-friendly applications. For example, dialog boxes hide the less frequently used GIMP options to give users a tidier interface without affecting feature-richness (Figure 1).

You can now configure the toolbox individually to show you only your fa-

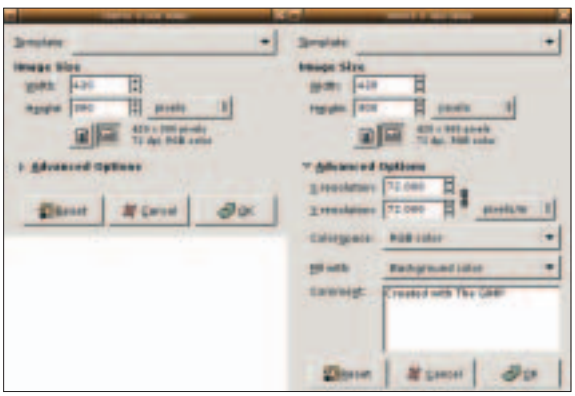

Figure 1: Less frequently used functions can be hidden (left), although they are still available when you need them (right).

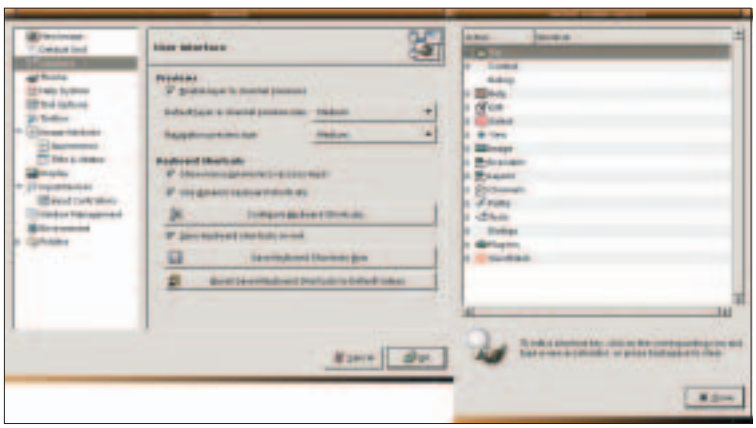

Figure 2: The new keyboard shortcut editor.

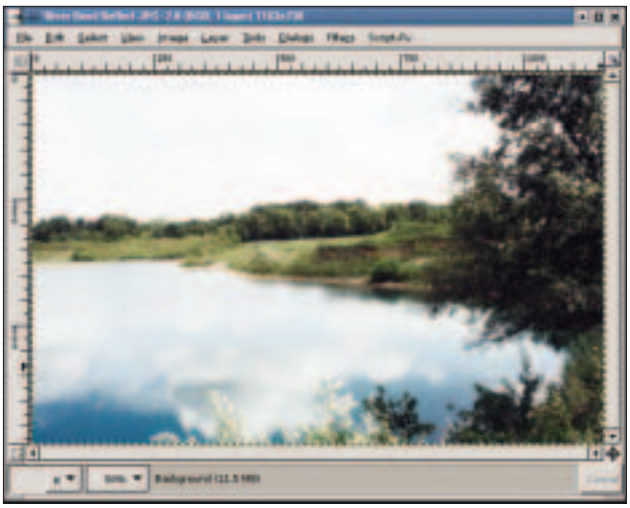

Figure 3: New plugins give users new effects. The "Warm Glow" filter shown here really does make the lighter parts of the image glow.

vorite tools. *File* | *Dialogs* | *Tool Options* allows you to remove tools. You can also add the color tools from *Tools* | *Color tools* to the toolbox window.

File | *Preferences* | *Toolbox* gives users additional configuration options. You can hide the color and brush selection icons in the lower part of the window, or display a thumbnail of the image you are currently working on – this makes it easier to keep track of what you are doing if you have a large number of open files.

Figure 4: You can replace the Gimp splash screen to suit your taste.

New Features

The new GIMP removes the need for users to apply tools first in order to see what those tools do. Transformation tools such as the rotate, mirror, or cut tools, now have a realtime preview for the layer they are applied to.

GIMP 2.2 also facilitates interaction with other programs. You can now drag and drop an image from your file manager or Internet browser into the GIMP window to open the image directly in that window.

File | *Preferences* | *Input devices* takes you to another new setup dialog, where you can configure a variety of input devices for controlling GIMP functions. For instance, you can configure devices such as touch screens or joysticks if your kernel supports them.

GIMP's new shortcut editor is another useful new feature that allows you to assign keyboard shortcuts. Selecting *File* | *Preferences* | *Interface* | *Configure keyboard shortcuts* leads to a dialog box that lets you define shortcuts for functions without menu entries (Figure 2).

The GIMP developers have also been busy working on new GIMP plugins. Just like the transformation tools, most filters in GIMP now have a preview feature, and there are a few completely new plugins (see Box 1).

Pointing the Way

The jump to Version 2.0 did not have much to show with respect to enhancements, but after seeing Version 2.2, most users will agree that the major structural work that went into Version 2.0 and laid the groundwork for Version 2.2 were worth the effort. The new features and enhancements still leave a few gaps, but as the improved and uncluttered interface shows, the GIMP is definitely heading in the right direction. ■

Box 1: New Plugins

Ever since the very first version of the GIMP, users have always had the option of adding functionality using a scripting language. Although this interface may not be as intuitive as the macro editors that commercial image manipulation packages provide, the number of plug-ins has grown and grown. GIMP 2.2 adds five new plugins.

- Cartoon (*Filters* / *Artistic* / *Cartoon*): gives an image the appearance of a drawing. The effect is most apparent when applied to photos.
- Difference of Gaussians (*Filters* / *Edge detect* / *Difference of Gaussians*): uses two blur functions for edge detection.
- Neon (*Filters* / *Edge detect* / *Neon*): detects edges using neon colors to highlight edges.
- Photocopy (*Filters* / *Artistic* / *Photocopy*): gives an image the appearance of a black and white photocopy.
- Retinex (*Filters* / *Color filters* / *Retinex*): normalizes colors to focus and clarify an image.
- Warm Glow (*Filters* / *Artistic* / *Warm glow*): amplifies the light areas of an image, making them appear to glow.

Box 2: Required Libraries

To build the GIMP, you need the developer packages for a few libraries. These libraries are typically found in additional packages with an extension such as *-devel* or *-dev*. Most distributions no longer use a *lib* prefix for individual packages. In some cases, you may also discover an older version of a required library. In this case you should always install the latest version.

- *pkgconfig* (no additional developer package)
- *libgtk2*
- *libglib2*
- *libpango*
- *libatk*
- *libfreetype*
- *libfontconfig*
- *libart*
- *gimp-print*
- *libjpeg*
- *libpng*
- *libtiff*

INFO

[1] GIMP: *http://www.gimp.org*

[2] Gnome Human Interface Guidelines: *http://developer.gnome.org/projects/gup/hig/2.0/*

[3] GIMP Manual: *http://docs.gimp.org/en/*

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