

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Package: Dreamweaver CS3

Publisher: Adobe

Review by: Dan Bellack

My journey to Dreamweaver CS3 began with PageMill, which was supplanted by GoLive (first GoLive 5 then GoLive 9). The past year plus that I spent with GoLive 9 was a frustrating time as I languished in a world devoid of helpful support materials either from Adobe or from third parties.

A couple of months ago, I shut my eyes, held my breath and jumped into the world of Dreamweaver CS3. As can be expected, my initial reaction was one of confusion as I faced a new user interface and lots of new ways of doing things. A pleasant feeling of support followed when I took advantage of a free thirty-day trial of “Dreamweaver CS3 Essential Training” with Garrick Chow offered as a “thank you” for registering my copy of DW3. As a Mac user I was especially pleased by the fact that Garrick was a Mac user and used the Mac format as the default (with explanations at appropriate times for Windows users).

As I worked through the online video lessons, I became aware of a gnawing hunger for a hardcopy text to sit next to my screen. That was the next nice experience. There are lots of books available. After a quick survey I went with a publisher and authors that I knew and obtained a copy of a Peachpit bestseller, Dreamweaver CS3, Visual Quickstart Guide by Tom Negrino and Dori Smith. Now I was really ready to dig in for some serious study.

My first view of the Dreamweaver layout left me with a feeling that I was a student pilot with a small plane rating who was suddenly sitting in the cockpit of a Boeing 777. The good news is that while visually overwhelming at first, I was able to quickly able to start learning where the things were that I used regularly. Dreamweaver also walked me through the process of setting up a custom Workspace Layout that greets me when I open DW. “Dan’s Daily Workspace” puts the stuff I use most in an intuitive listing that makes my life easier.

Now that Dreamweaver has been designed to run on Intel Macs it is very responsive on my Mac Pro. The file saves are speedy and I assume that when I launch the site in a couple of weeks I will also be very pleased with the upload speeds as well (internet permitting).

I also like the CSS interface. It makes linking to and modifying the CSS styles on my site's pages very easy. Based on my limited experience with Dreamweaver I think it is one of the major improvements.

Viewing my site in a variety of selected browsers is also easy and quick.

Once I learned the value of always working inside the Files Panel when adding, deleting and renaming files life is good and my site behaves nicely.

I have found working with images to be a real improvement over my GoLive experience. The fact that some basic editing tools are available in Dreamweaver and that you can cut and paste files from Adobe Photoshop Elements makes my life easier.

As is the case with any application, there are some things that I felt could have been improved. When trying to view Table Properties in the Properties Window, the tiny table symbol appears if you are able to set your cursor at the exact upper left hand corner of the table. I found it difficult to do at times. I will say it worked better with my Magic Mouse than with my Logitech TrackMan Wheel. I also found a number of the icons in the Insert window were a bit tiny.

I have not had the chance to explore everything that Dreamweaver offers. The fancy user-interface widgets offered by the Spry frameworks, whizzy multilayered drop-down menus and Ajax capabilities, are good examples. As I begin to plumb the some of the depths of Dreamweaver I know I will find other things that I find really great (or maybe a little frustrating or confusing). Right now, I think it's a great tool for less accomplished web dudes like me as well as the real pros out there.

Thanks Adobe.