How to

Automotion

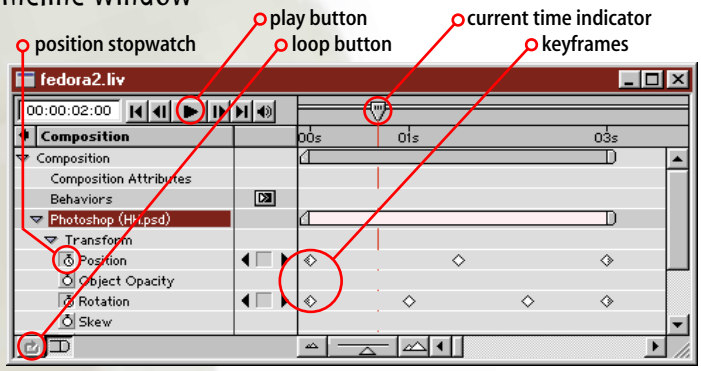
Create a library of Web animations in LiveMotion

by Molly E. Holzschlag

The scene is an online fashion magazine. Each week, the Web designer wants to feature a new accessory by making it move across the page. One week it'll be a great pair of satin pumps, the next a stylish handbag, and the week after that a pair of must-have sunglasses. And she wants each accessory to move differently each day of the week. And it needs to start tomorrow.

A production person's nightmare? It doesn't have to be. An easy way to get the animation you need is to create and store "motion" styles in Adobe LiveMotion. It's a technique that can help keep content fresh while ensuring that the workflow runs smoothly. And you can store as many different animations as you like. Each time you want to update the object, you simply replace it with a new one and apply the saved style.

Timeline window



To loop your animation, select "Composition" in the Timeline window and then click the Loop button in the lower-left corner.

The right size

Because you'll likely be creating a custom animation for a specific area on the page, you'll want to start out with precision sizing. Then you can add a background color (or image), if you want one.

1. Choose File > New. In the Composition Settings dialog box, specify the size of your animation in pixels (you can change the size later, if necessary, by choosing Edit > Composition Settings). Leave the other settings at their defaults.
2. Add a background color, texture, or image to the composition: To add a color, select the background swatch in the toolbox, choose Window > Color, and then select a color from the palette. To add a texture, choose Window > Textures, select a texture from the palette, and then click Apply. To add an image, choose File > Place, select the image, and then click Open.

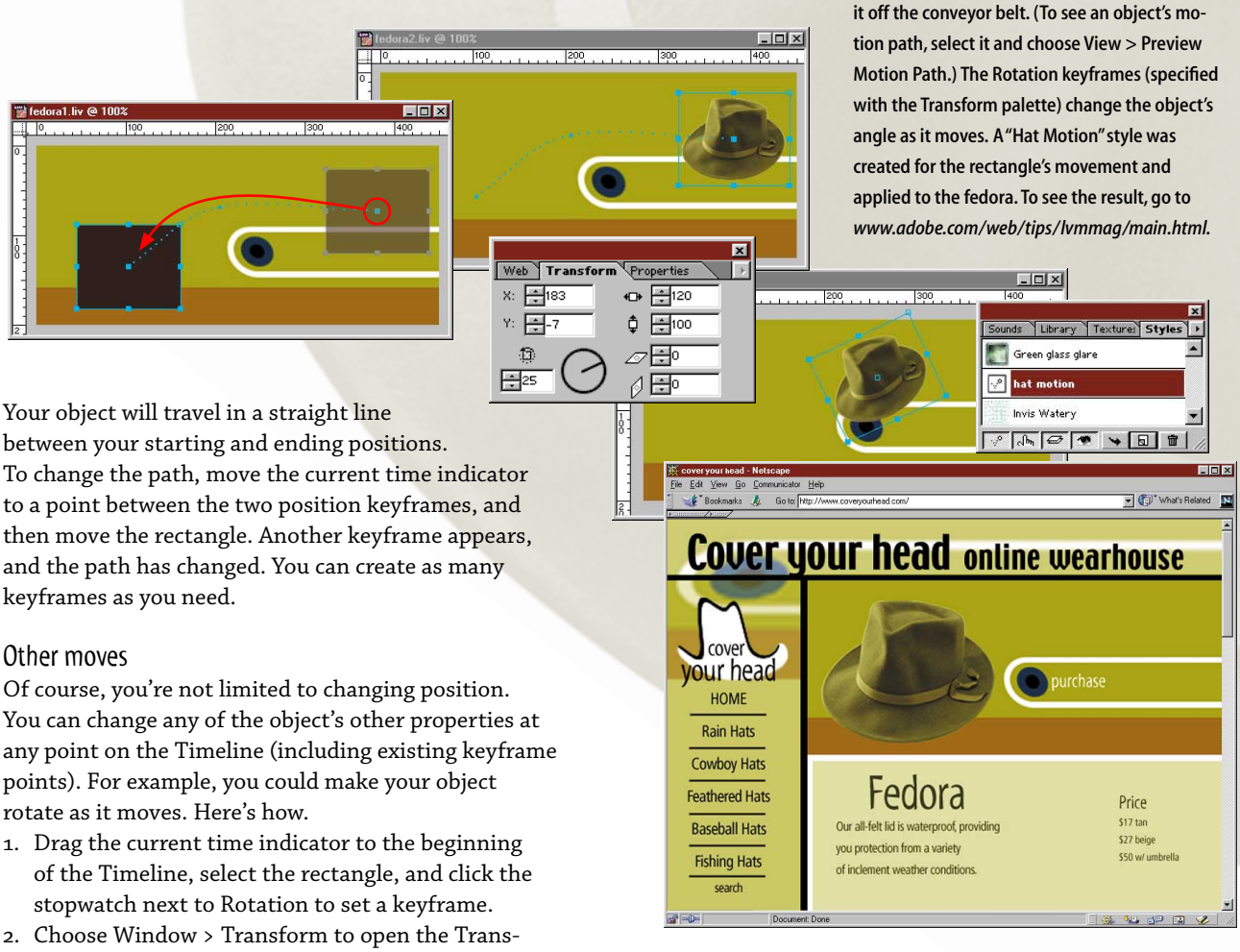
Basic moves

First, since you're probably new to LiveMotion, let's review a few animation basics. LiveMotion's animation center is the Timeline window. This is where you work on an object to make it move, rotate, change size, or go through other transformations over time.

Objects change based on the properties you assign them at certain points in the Timeline. Each point is called a keyframe—a standard animation concept. A keyframe denotes a moment in time when a specific transformation is applied to an object. If you want to change the position of an object, for example, you create a position keyframe for it within the Timeline.

To start, you could import one of the images you want to animate; but since you want the animation to work for several different images, it's easier for now to use one of the objects included in LiveMotion.

1. Choose Window > Transform to open the Transform palette, and then select the rectangle tool from the Tools palette. Using the dimensions shown in the upper-right corner of the Transform palette, drag a rectangle in your composition to the size of the objects you'll be animating.
2. Open the Timeline by choosing Window > Timeline. Here you'll see your rectangle listed, as well as any image you've placed. In the composition, select the rectangle, and position it where you want it to start moving. You'll notice that it will be selected simultaneously in the Timeline.
3. In the Timeline window, click the arrow next to the rectangle's name to expand its properties, and then click the arrow next to Transform.
4. Set an initial keyframe for the rectangle's starting position by clicking the stopwatch icon next to Position; the keyframe (a diamond) appears in the Timeline window. Drag the current time indicator to the time at which your animation will end (for the fashion accessories example, such an animation should last only a few seconds), and then position the rectangle at its ending location. Another keyframe appears in the Timeline.
5. Drag the current time indicator back to the beginning of the Timeline, and then click the Play button in the upper-left corner of the Timeline window.



Position keyframes (shown on previous page) create a motion path for the rectangle, moving it off the conveyor belt. (To see an object's motion path, select it and choose View > Preview Motion Path.) The Rotation keyframes (specified with the Transform palette) change the object's angle as it moves. A "Hat Motion" style was created for the rectangle's movement and applied to the fedora. To see the result, go to *www.adobe.com/web/tips/lvmmag/main.html.*

Your object will travel in a straight line between your starting and ending positions. To change the path, move the current time indicator to a point between the two position keyframes, and then move the rectangle. Another keyframe appears, and the path has changed. You can create as many keyframes as you need.

Other moves

Of course, you're not limited to changing position. You can change any of the object's other properties at any point on the Timeline (including existing keyframe points). For example, you could make your object rotate as it moves. Here's how.

1. Drag the current time indicator to the beginning of the Timeline, select the rectangle, and click the stopwatch next to Rotation to set a keyframe.
2. Choose Window > Transform to open the Transform palette. This is where you'll specify rotation. Drag the current time indicator to the location of your last position keyframe and specify a rotation in the Transform palette by dragging the radius inside the circle (or typing an angle value); a second keyframe appears at this time. Now you've added rotation to your object's movement. Preview it by clicking the Play button.

Continue making modifications to the object as you see fit, using the Timeline to set keyframes for other properties (such as opacity and size) to enhance your design.

Style it and go

The Styles palette in LiveMotion is a particularly rich feature that enables you to save any style you create—one that can include motion and other transformations. The saved style will be available at any time, so you can apply it to any object.

With the rectangle selected in the Timeline, choose Window > Styles. In the Styles dialog box, click the New Style button. In the dialog box, name your style, deselect Layers, select Object Animation/Rollover, and click OK.

The motion you created will now appear as a style in the Styles palette (to see it there, make sure you've selected Name View from the Styles palette's pop-up menu; click the right arrow in the upper-right corner). If you want to get rid of a style, simply select it in the Styles palette and click the Delete Style icon.

Now that you've got a style for your motion, you can apply it. Create a new composition, specify a background (if you want one), and then choose File > Place to place your new object in the composition. Position it where you want it to start, select your style from the Styles palette, and click Apply.

Once and again

After you get adept at animating your objects, you can create an entire library of specific movements and other transformations. For example, using the opacity property, you could make a series of fades that vary in duration. Or a series of zooms that vary in size. The power of a style is its availability: write it once, then use it anytime. ◗

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