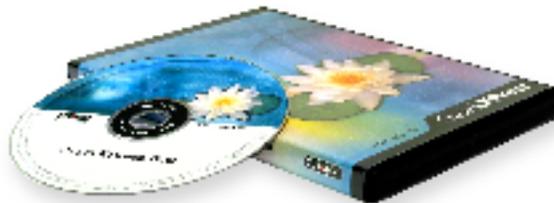




Real People Reviews by Daniel M. East
Product: QuarkXpress 6.1
Manufacturer/Vendor/Developer: Quark
MSRP: \$945.00
Review date: June 11, 2004

PULL QUOTE: "Wake up and smell the SuperDrive, Quark..."



DESCRIPTION (What's it do? What's it got?): QuarkXpress (QXP) reigned for many years as the premier layout and design tool for major magazines, newspapers, graphic designers and advertising agencies for press-ready and/or web-ready output. The latest carnation of QXP brings many more features and options as well as more OS X compatibility.

MIN. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: OS X 10.2 or later; 128 Mb RAM; 230 Mb free disk space; CD-ROM drive

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: While the interface is updated, yet familiar and with a host of new features, QuarkXpress 6 wasn't at all what I'd hoped it would be. I found it to be almost too much, too late and very slow. I wanted to love QXP 6.1, but even with enhancements like PDF export and project management, this longtime favorite just doesn't walk the walk for me. In so much as I'd like to get more into the ins and outs of this application, I just don't see the need since the "major update" feel like an effort to appease their existing users rather than attract new ones.

LIKES : Some of the best features in QXP are the plug-ins from third-party developers that make up for some of the clunkiness of the built in items. Extensis QT Tools, Dynagram INposition, Badia ContactPage and a ton of Gluon Xtensions (most are great!) take up the slack, but at a price. I do like the better-late addition of multiple undos and better preview rendering, and advanced users will love the addition of project management.

DISLIKES : Issue number 1: QXP 6.1 is slow. The 6.1 update was supposed to accelerate performance under 10.3x, but I found this isn't the case. In fact, 6.1 is "buggy." Fonts have problems printing, even with the addition of a new mapping utility. It is hardly any easier on the eyes with an interface that seems more like Mac system 7 than OS X. There is NO manual and you have to pay for this monster. It seems like experienced QXP users will "feel" at home until they stumble across something slightly different labeled as an improvement -- e.g., the extra step in creating a new document. The lack of some simple effects and filters only adds extra steps and time for my needs, and, even when importing images, there are major file compatibility problems. Add to this the problems running the 6.0 to 6.1 updater (although free) and the fact that the components don't all show the newer version, this is a relic with a lot of smoke and mirrors (although don't try to create that effect using QXP) and little to offer most new customers aside from running natively under OS X.

HOW DOES THIS PRODUCT COMPARE? : Ok, so before I jump into the ongoing battle for world domination between Quark and Adobe, to me it is like the old Ford v. Chevy argument. It is all about what works for you. For me, the CS suite is the complete solution for every design need and it works well, it works quickly and it integrates effortlessly, and, given that I use Photoshop® for so much of my own work, InDesign saves time in a huge range of ways. There is a NEED for QuarkXpress, but not a demand. At \$945 vs. InDesign at \$699 -- you be the judge.

WHO MIGHT ENJOY THIS PRODUCT? Realistically, if you are a design professional who has years of QXP under your belt and have made the move to OS X, you'll really have to upgrade to v.6.1.

TEST SYSTEM: Apple Titanium PowerBook G4 500 - 1Gb RAM - 10.3.4

FINAL THOUGHTS: In my opinion, the battle is over. Quark has simply lost too much of its audience and isn't gaining any new fans. By the time you relearn QXP from the books and videos that are all far superior to Quark's own training -- not to mention their \$50.00 manual -- you could have already mastered Adobe's InDesign CS...and probably Illustrator CS as well. I can't see new customers coming on board since most art schools are still using v. 3.x and totally passed over v. 5 which didn't have OS X support at all. Wake up and smell the SuperDrive, Quark. Most advanced QXP users whom I've spoken to have the perception that Quark has tried to "throw them a bone" with too long an absence and too little, too late. I would have to agree. Add to that surprisingly poor customer service and terrible, expensive support (although that is more common these days) and there isn't much here unless you are upgrading so that you can be 100% OS X (and it is a great thing to be, by the way). Does QuarkXpress 6.1 do the job? Yes, but very shy of the wish list and in a way that is the antithesis of "user-friendly."

OVERALL RATING: 2 out of 5 FAIR

For more information, visit: www.quark.com

Daniel East is the founder and president of The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs); a member of The Apple Consultants Network (ACN); a member of The Apple Developer Connection (ADC); contributing editor, Macsimum Perspective; contributing reporter, MacDesign magazine; co-host, "PC Talk Radio;" a live speaker/presenter and a freelance columnist for several Mac publications.

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