

Toon Boom Studio

Publisher: [Toon Boom](#)

Current Version: 1.2.1

Toon Boom Studio inspires creativity with a comprehensive toolset for all 2D cartoon animation styles, including flash cartoons for the web and for video. From drawing, painting and importing, to lip-sync, layout and media management, Toon Boom Studio compliments desktop animation production processes and simplifies creative tasks. With the additional imaginative power liberated by the unique 3D stage and camera, animators are free to produce cinematic content that engages and enchants.



Reader Opinions

Who better to evaluate software than those who use it every day. If you have used Toon Boom Studio, please take a moment and share your opinion of it with other Mac users. The more opinions we have, the better our buying decisions will be. [Fill out a Reader Opinion form.](#)

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Toon Boom Studio

by Jeff Foxx

As broadband internet services spread like wildfire, web surfers are craving more and more activity in their browsers. The Internet has become a full-fledged entertainment medium, which opens the door for animators to create web-based cartoons that are as capable of captivating an audience as Saturday-morning television. There are whole websites devoted to flash animations (one of my personal favorites is homestarrunner.com). For animators familiar with traditional animation techniques, creating a web-based cartoon in Flash can be a bit cumbersome. But Toon Boom Studio takes conventional animation principals and combines them with a timeline-based animation flow similar to Macromedia Flash, and delivers a full-featured tool for quickly creating engaging web animations.

The Look of It

The Toon Boom Studio interface is very nicely laid out and looks very natural in OSX. You wouldn't believe that it wasn't developed for OSX. In fact, TBS was ported to the Mac by [Software MacKiev](#), a company that specializes in porting Windows software to the Mac. But the interface for TBS is very attractive, intuitive and uses Aqua nicely.

Animation Workflow

Toon Boom Studio has two modes: Drawing and Sceneplanning. While in Drawing mode, you, well, draw. This is where you draw or import any elements that will be used in your animation, including Illustrator files, sounds, and media elements. Once you have your elements established, you must switch to Sceneplanning mode, in which you do the animation and layout of the scene. This is very different from Flash animation, where you draw directly onto your workspace.

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Version: 1.2.1

Type: Commercial

Street Price: \$374, upgrade: \$129; Academic pricing available.

Requires: Power Macintosh G4 (recommended) or G3; Mac OSX; 128 MB RAM; 100 MB available disk space.

Strength: Simplifies web animation, making creating toons for the web more like traditional animation, easy to use.

Weakness: Somewhat expensive, awkward timeline keyframing.

Rating:

Intended Function: 4

Ease Of Use: 4

User Interface: 4

Documentation: 5

Features: 4

Uniqueness: 5

Value: 4

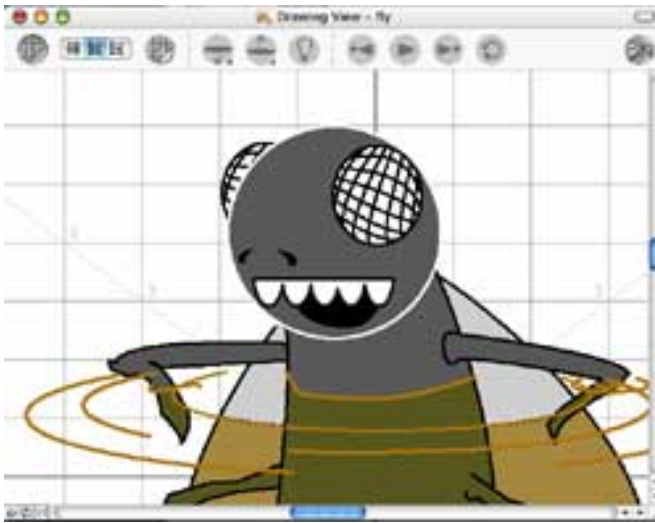


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Reviewer:

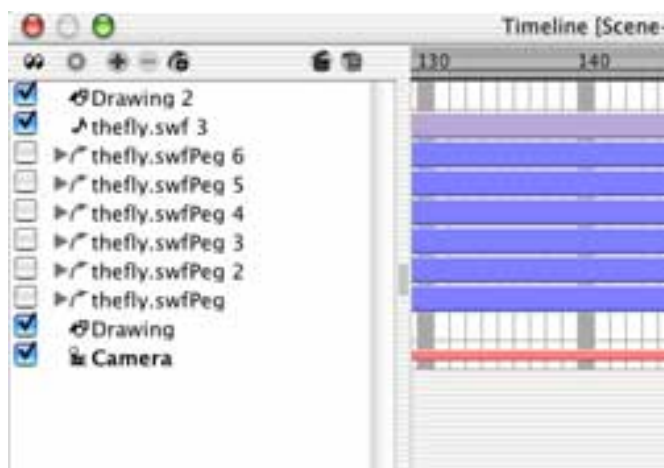
Jeff Foxx is an art director for a multimedia and web development company. He also never wears a suit.



Toon Boom's drawing mode lets you establish all of the visual elements in your animation.

Do you remember making the little flip book animations in class when you were supposed to be paying attention? They usually involved a stick man running into some sort of peril. Toon Boom Studio uses a similar concept for animation. In the drawing mode, you can draw individual frames of the animation, using onion skinning to draw subsequent frames.

Once you have all of your drawings, you must switch to Sceneplanning mode. This is similar to switching applications in that all palettes, tools and menus change. It is in this mode that you take the drawings you have made and put them into action. The drawings you have made are already in place on the timeline, with frames extending out according to how many frames you drew in Drawing mode. This is very different from Flash, where you can manipulate the timeline directly. In Toon Boom, to extend a drawing out a few frames, you have to go back to drawing mode and draw in the extra frames, or copy and paste from existing frames. This is a very time-consuming process, but guarantees precise animation.

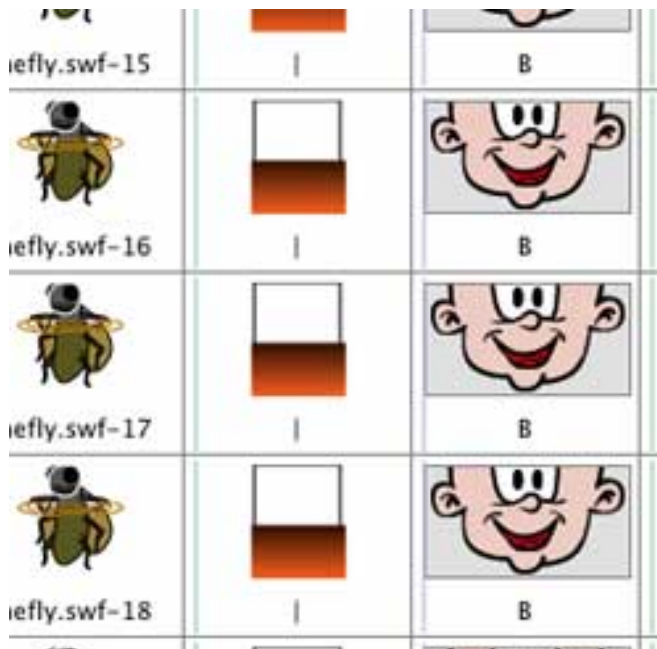


The timeline, where your elements are animated, can be a bit difficult to get used to.

Can't-Live-Without Features

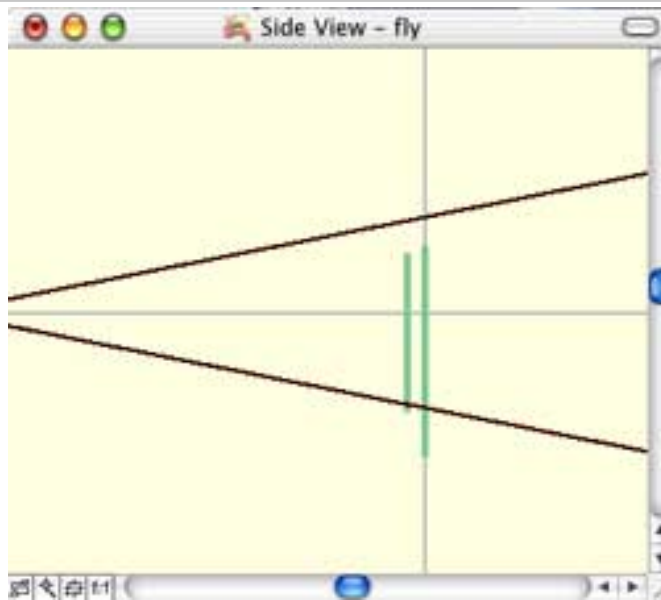
Most of what can be done in Toon Boom Studio, could just as easily be done in Flash, but Toon Boom offers some features that are far superior to Flash. One feature is Toon Boom's "Import and Vectorize" option. This is useful if you are one who likes to draw by hand, then scan. In my testing, Import and Vectorize, though it didn't offer any customization settings, was much more accurate than Flash's Trace Bitmap function. This feature makes it easy to import hand-drawn characters ready to be animated.

One of the greatest features of Toon Boom Studio, and one that you'll wonder how you ever lived without if you've done any animation with voices, is the lip synch function. Toon Boom analyzes your voice track and assigns a letter to each sound, based on the position the mouth should be in, to make that sound. You can even select to have the letters displayed as a little face which shows you the mouth positions. You can then use these drawings as a guide to animate the mouth on your character. It may take some tweaking, but this is a priceless feature.



The awesome lip synch feature analyzes your voice file and provides visual suggestions for mouth positions.

Another plus to animators who have been working in Flash, is Toon Boom's incredible integration with Flash. You can easily import existing Flash animations, and Toon Boom is able to interpret most everything except for ActionScript. If your animation requires some scripting, don't worry, Toon Boom also includes an import filter for Flash, so you can open your Toon Boom projects from within Flash.



Toon Boom's camera angles let you determine the perspective of elements in your scene.

Getting in Toon?

If you are interested in animation, Toon Boom Studio is a great place to start. It does a fantastic job of organizing and simplifying the process. If you are a Flash animator and are interested in doing more traditional-style animating, Toon Boom may be worth a look, but switching isn't easy, as the two applications perform very differently. But, Toon Boom goes out of its way to accommodate Flash animators with awesome import/export options between itself and Flash. If you are a serious animator, the price is outstanding. If you are a hobbyist just interested in dabbling, the price may be a bit inhibitive. But, one thing is for sure, Toon Boom does well what it claims, making 2D animation for the web a lot less painful.

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Excellent Good OK Poor Worthless

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