

CARTOONS AND ANIMATION

Toon Boom Studio V3

\$399* A brilliant animation tool at a reasonable price

CONTACT INFO

Telephone 001 514 278 8666
URL www.toonboomstudio.com

PRICING

*Full version \$399
Express version \$99

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

G4, 256MB RAM, Mac OS X 10.3.9,
100MB free hard disk space, Wacom
tablet recommended

FOR AND AGAINST

- + Amazing range of tools
- + Intuitive interface
- + Great fun!
- + 3D scene planning
- + Lip syncing
- Full version pricey for beginners

VERDICT

★★★★★

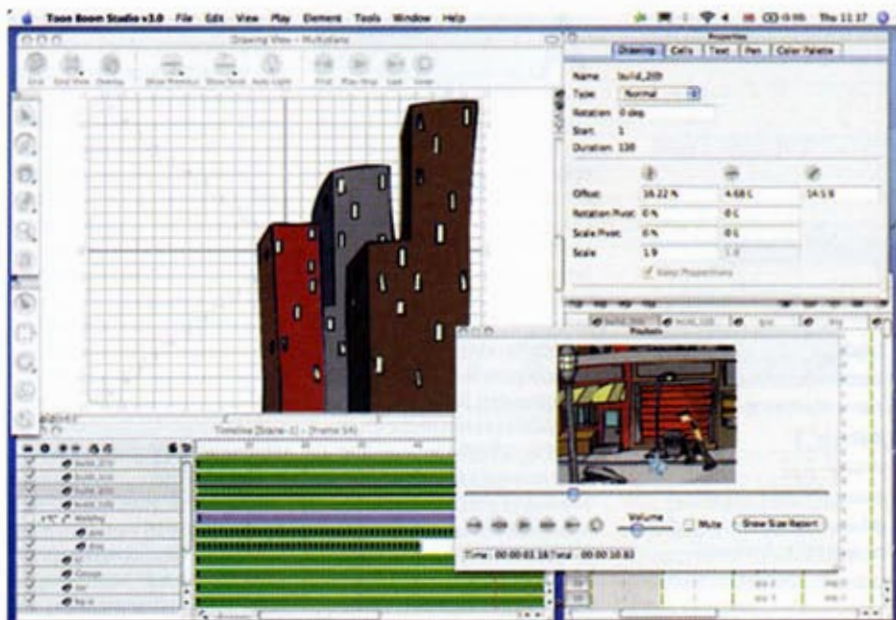
"A brilliant tool for creating cartoons. The full version may be a touch expensive for dabblers, but for anyone serious about animation it's the only sensible option."

Toon Boom Studio V3 (TBS) is the latest release of Toon Boom Technologies' all-singing, all-dancing animation program. The product is aimed mainly at animators wanting to create cartoons for distribution on the web, but because the app can also export to QuickTime, a number of distribution channels are possible – even TV and HDTV, for instance.

As with most applications, there is a bit of a learning curve to be climbed when you start using *Toon Boom Studio*. First, you'll need to get your head around the idea of using individual frames (or cells) as part of an Exposure Sheet containing all the elements of your animation. The Exposure Sheet holds backgrounds, characters, gestures, limbs and anything else you want to animate. This can be used for meticulously planning animations, but if you want, you can use the more conventional (at least in the world of web animation) timeline and layer-based approach.

Know your onions

You'll also need to grasp such concepts as onion skinning – a process by which you can see the underlying frame in order to make sure the next one is in the correct position. While this may all sound complex, it really is quite simple once you get going, and TBS makes it very easy to learn fundamental animation



An intuitive interface and fun tools make *Toon Boom Studio* ideal for anyone interested in creating their own cartoons.

skills as you mess around with the application.

The beauty of TBS is its sublime interface. Version 2.5's interface was excellent, and V3 just takes this further. It features some excellent drawing tools, with full Wacom tablet support. But the real clincher is the 3D scene-planning mode. This enables you to build your cartoons on different planes, therefore providing real distance

into separate regions ready for animating. Using pivot points you can set up a character animation in no time at all – it's very intuitive and fun to use. It's also great for creating *South Park*-style animations, where there's less emphasis on real movement and more focus on perceived movement.

Another winning feature is the lip-syncing tool. This makes giving your characters accurate

import the usual variety of vector and bitmap files makes the creative process a lot easier – *Illustrator* has much better drawing tools than *Toon Boom*, for instance, and *Photoshop* obviously handles bitmap editing a lot better. TBS is the tool that will assemble your files and craft them into an animation ready for almost any medium.

Lite fantastic

For those wanting a little less animation power, and not wanting to spend the big bucks, TBS comes in an *Express* version too. It limits the sheer amount of content you can animate, but has essentially the same workflow. If you're only wanting to create small animations for the web, this is probably the better option, and costs about a quarter of the full package. The good thing is that if you want to upgrade from the *Express* version to the full version, there's a very reasonable and easy path.

In short, *Toon Boom Studio* is fun, imaginative and useful – and highly recommended.

Rob Carney

"The beauty of TBS is its sublime interface; V3 takes this further and features excellent drawing tools"

between objects and eliminating the need for matching up perspective or tweening to simulate distance. It works really well – and is easy to use to boot. The new unified interface eliminates the need to swap between drawing and scene-planning modes, making the creation process a lot simpler.

One tool that we really love in this latest version of *Toon Boom Studio* is the Cutter tool. This enables you to take your vector drawings and divide them up

phoneme shapes an absolute doddle – as you work with the tool you begin to realise just how easy it is to give the illusion of vowels and consonants. A new Transform tool – combining the Scale, Rotation and Skew tools of old – makes animating individual objects quicker, and the ability to animate text is a much needed addition.

TBS V3 is a solid animation tool that's a whole lotta fun to use. The export options are excellent, and the ability to

The new Cutout tool makes light work of creating *South Park*-style animations.

