

29 November 2005

By: Alex Muradin, Editor, Software Reviews



## Mmmmm Fire.....

*Just like the caveman's television, this is fun to look at*

**Where's my dream image viewer?** I'm still searching for an image viewer that will give me speed, utility, ergonomics and more. I don't know how much longer I'll have to look, but I hope that Firegraphic XP offers me these things. Firegraphic XP 8 is an image viewer that provides both a professional look and an intuitive interface; let's see if it's got that little extra under its hood.

**Features** Well, Firegraphic XP and I didn't get off on the right foot since I wasn't able to specify exactly where I wanted my download to go. Not only did it not let me specify where I wanted it to go, but it went ahead and added itself directly in my Start menu program's list without my consent. If you don't have enough free space in your "Program Files" folder, clear some out if you're still interested in getting Firegraphic XP. When I started the program, I was then asked if I wanted a shortcut on my desktop and in my Start menu (but it still didn't get rid of the one that was already in there). But I will let bygones be bygones and go on, maybe I'm in for a treat. I went ahead and chose the complete mode between the full/compact mode. The GUI is split into four different window panes that can all be adjusted (even to the point that they no longer exist). The left is your basic explorer window where you navigate through your system to view your specified folders. Your right/center window pane displays the preview of the specific picture you've chose. The bottom right pane shows the thumbnail view (small images that are specified in your explorer pane), and the final bottom left window pane gives you the properties of the image you're viewing. If that's too confusing for you as a user, you can always switch to compact mode where everything's laid out in an even simpler manner. Here you get your basic preview window and a thumbnail window. It might sound confusing on paper, but it's all pretty intuitive once you look at the image viewer itself. It's all interconnected and intertwined to what you have selected. Firegraphic has its own added twist to image viewing and that's its ability to display thumbnails of the contents of a folder by hovering your mouse over it. The downside to this application is that it's somewhat limited in its range. It only supports BMP, EMF, GIF, ICO, JPG, PCD, PCX, PNG, PSD, PSP, RAS, RAW, TGA, TIF, WBMP and WMF formats. If you're looking for CD/DVD burning tools, you have to upgrade to the Pro version for some basic image editing functions. I liked the fact that you always have the ability to adjust the background color theme for the program. It does add a little more variety to the everyday mix. The other cool little tool I liked was the fact that you can always adjust the size of the thumbnails in order to bump them up in size to get a better look, or make them smaller to try and fit as many as you can in your pane. Firegraphic loads images as soon as you select them, but there's a split second where you notice the focusing effects. I'd have to honestly say that I thought FastStone was a little faster than Firegraphic XP.

**The Good** Firegraphic's got a good load speed for picture viewing. It has a very nice interface that's really ergonomically put together and intuitive. You can play around with the background settings in case you get bored with one color. The slideshow and burning abilities are always good. It's got two viewing modes if you don't want it to take up your whole screen.

**The Bad** If you like to have programs installed where you want them, don't get your hopes up here, Firegraphic will install itself where it pleases. I've also seen faster image loaders than Firegraphic XP.

**The Truth** It's not bad for \$50.00, but why spend money on something that you can get for free? Yes, it's sleek, yes it's nice to look at, but it has competitors that can do the job better. There's no doubt that this isn't a good image viewer, give it a shot. Check out some pictures below.