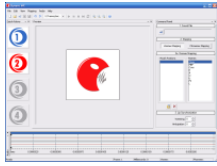


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## Talking Pictures Everywhere

*Give your flash animations a voice of their own*

Animated websites will always be among the most appreciated. Of course, if you put too much animation into it, you run the risk of the web page taking a lot of time to load. In order to give that "live" touch to your website, one generally uses flash animations. Flash has become so powerful that it is used to make games and even cartoons. You all know that you can add sounds to your flash animations. Usually, the softwares that manage to do that professional job that you need cost a lot and not everyone affords to buy them. Now there is a new alternative that is a little more cost efficient and all it does is to give voice to your flash characters. Its name is LipSync MX and the price to hear your animated characters is \$99.00... a little too much one would say. The software is developed by Di-O-Matic and not long ago it has reached version 2.0. The installation file takes 15.5MB of your hard disk space and the memory usage gets about 40MB. This version brings features like importing SWF files as viseme (unit of speech in the visual domain, corresponding to phonemes) with transparency support. The user can now import MP3 audio files and does not have to limit to the WAV audio as in the previous version. The WYSIWYG interface of the software is very nicely drawn and attractive. You will not find the software difficult to manage, as the functions it has are not as many as you would expect. There are four steps you have to follow in order to finish the synchronization. First of all, you must get a grab on an animated flash file and choose the audio file you want to add. If these two conditions are fulfilled, then your job is almost done. With LipSync MX you won't have to spend hours to synchronize the characters frame by frame. The working algorithm of the software is based upon the association of phonemes with visemes that correspond to the positions of the mouth. With the four steps panel, the software simplifies a lot the process of lip synchronization and the publishing of the SWF file. The resulted file can be furthermore edited in Macromedia Flash. On the left side of the application window there is the four step panel that will help you to easily publish your work. Step one is for importing the desired audio file. Step two: the user chooses which viseme goes with which phoneme. Number three is playing the result of your settings (I see it as a preview of the final result) and in number four you get to create your SWF file. All these steps can also be done manually by using the menu bar. The result being a video file, I guess you have given a thought to the framerate. You can choose between 12fps, 15fps, 24fps and 30fps or you can set your own framerate, depending on the number of frames. Every action in the software has a corresponding keyboard combination. Check the Help menu in order to find them out. The help file also contains tutorials to help you understand better how the program works and to get an idea about visemes, phonemes, mapping, modifying the visemes and the phonemes etc. In the tutorial, there is a special section that will guide you into importing the SWF file into Flash. Of course, it is not too difficult to do that and you can use the Import to Stage function or the Import to Library one. The difference is that - if you use the latter option - the set will be added within a movie clip. Keep in mind that the file imported in Flash will be mute. **The Good** The software is easy to use and, once you have figured out how the visemes and phonemes work, everything is piece of cake. The developer has been kind enough to provide a Help menu that will explain every aspect of the software and much more. **The Bad** The price seems a little too spicy. The software's looks are indeed to be appreciated, but that does not compensate for the fact that competition has a much boring interface, but almost the same options. **The Truth** I liked working with the software and its "maneuverability" is extraordinary. I expected to be annoyed by all sorts of popup messages, but it sat still and let me mind my business. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*