

SOFTWARE DESIGN

Runtime Revolution Studio 2

£199 Application design has never been so accessible, but it still takes time to master

CONTACT INFO
 Developer Runtime Revolution
 www.runrev.com
 Vendor Runtime Revolution
 www.runrev.com

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
 256MB RAM, Mac OS X 10.2.7 or later,
 100MB free hard disk space

FOR AND AGAINST

- ⊕ Universal binary
- ⊕ Plain English scripting language
- ⊕ Supportive community
- ⊕ Access to other developers' scripts
- ⊕ Powerful scripting capability
- ⊖ Bit buggy

VERDICT
 ★★★★★
 "A friendly program with a supportive community, but it takes time and patience to get to grips with."

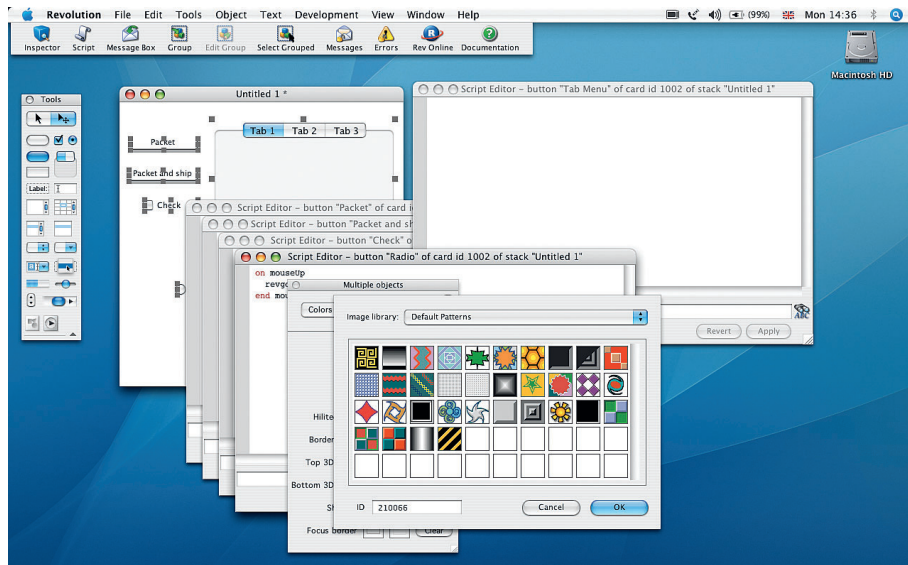
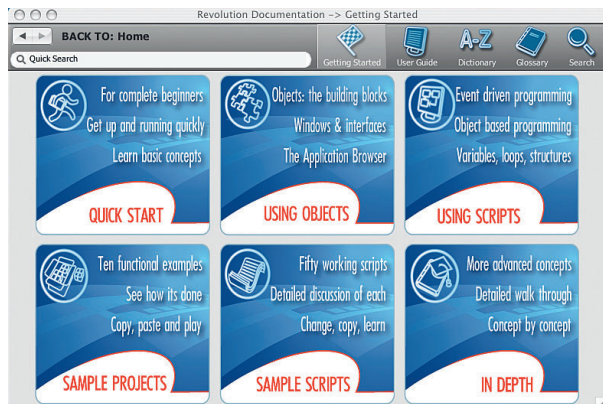
One area of home computing currently undergoing a quiet revolution is amateur software writing. Gone are the days when programmers needed degrees to make software. With simplified design tools like Runtime Revolution's *Studio 2* suite, which comes with blocks of pre-coded elements and scripting capability, things have got a lot easier.

The state of play in software design can be equated to website design around six or seven years ago. Back then, building a good-looking website still had mystery to it and required coding knowledge; these days, simple web builders like *Rapidweaver* or *Freeway*, or to a lesser extent *iWeb*, do the coding for you. Well, *Studio 2* hasn't quite made software design as easy as web design with those apps, not yet at least, but it has certainly made it far more accessible for the masses.

As easy as LEGO

Studio 2 is a drag-and-drop environment for purpose-building your own application. Programs are built as cards that make up a stack, onto which you drag in your elements and script them to perform certain tasks. The cards contain the content and the stack makes up the application. *Studio* will make versions of your applications to run on Mac, Windows, Linux or UNIX operating systems.

Dozens of video tutorials can be opened via the Documentation icon – simply replay them until you get the gist of the lesson.



Studio 2 is a great way into application design, and while the learning curve can be steep, it comes with a great support network to get you up to speed.

You can drag buttons, drop-down menus, text fields, artwork, or even media such as video, onto the card. It can customise all these elements too, so you can design your own buttons, for example. You then arrange the elements, and align them. But the main power of *Studio* is the ability to script the elements – to tell them how to behave. So, for instance, if you drag in a button and click the script icon, you can tell the

Runtime's website, too. You will find the environment easy enough to work with, but it takes time to pick up the mechanics of Runtime's tool, plus you are constantly dipping into the dictionary and glossary of scripting terms to try and pick up the language. It's not a painful process, but anyone who thinks they can have a new application running in a matter of hours should think again, unless they have prior software

feedback, or check out applications made by other users. You can also cut and paste scripts and commands to flesh out your own application.

Fancy a house in Bermuda?

Studio 2 is not without bugs and niggles. Some of the video tutorials are outdated and don't always reflect the current layout of the application, and the tutorials often come with Windows screenshots rather than Mac OS. Also, the Inspector icon can be frisky, displaying invisible items when you asked them not to be. And there's no way, as far as we could see, to close other developers' stacks once you've opened them through the Rev Online browser.

But overall, it's a still a fun app that lets you look behind the scenes of software design in a supportive environment. You can also dream a bit about creating that essential app and selling it for \$5 a licence on Versiontracker.com. If you are prepared to put the time in, at the very least *Studio 2* will educate you about your software; at the most it could buy you that house in Bermuda...
James Ellerbeck

"Programs are built as cards that make up a stack, onto which you drag in elements and script them"

button how to act when clicked, or where to take you. Anyone who grew up with a LEGO or Mechano set should be able to get to grips with it soon enough.

The scripting language is unique to *Studio*, and is nearly all written in plain English. We ran the full version of *Studio 2* for a week. In that time, we went through all the training videos, which are accessible through Runtime's site for free to anyone, even if you only sign up for the trial version. There is a responsive forum to visit on

writing experience. Learning Runtime's language is about as complicated as learning simple HTML: the main problem isn't the tool, it's not having a clear idea of what you're creating.

The main benefit of *Studio 2* is the support that comes with it. As we've mentioned, the forum is responsive, and there is also the chance to share scripts and designs with other developers. In the main icon panel is the Rev Online icon; this clicks through to a user panel, where you have space to post your work, get