

Creating a Flash Jukebox

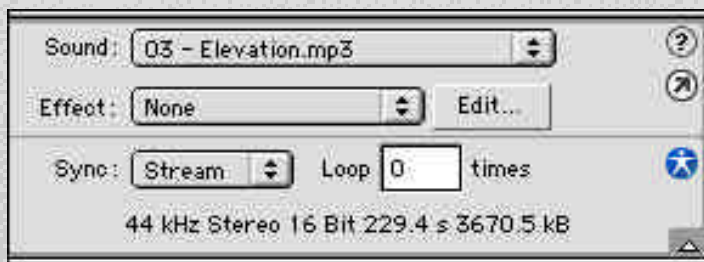
Because Flash can import the MP3 sound file format, you could use it to create your own jukebox. Here, you'll be using the loadMovie action to load swf files that have soundtracks in them. You'll then use the unloadMovie action to stop the sounds from playing.

Overview

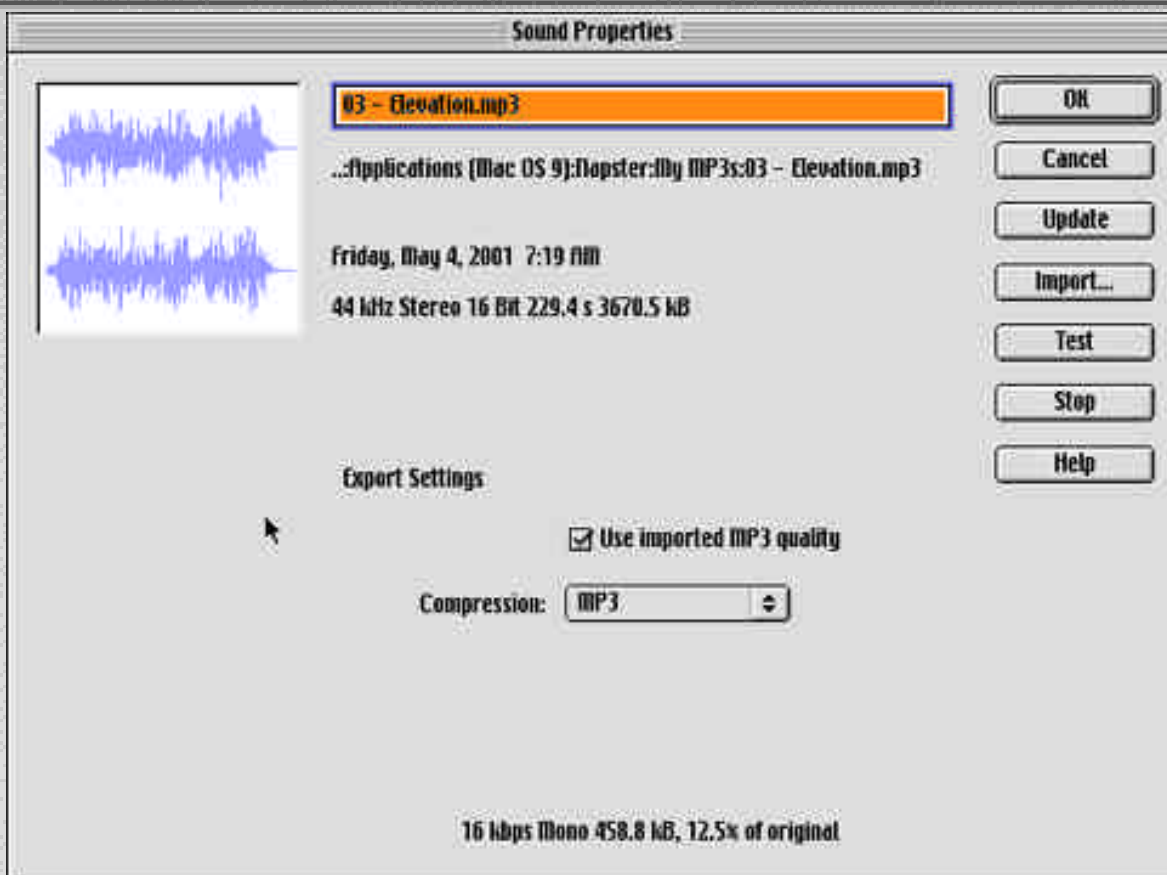
1. Open the Jukebox folder and examine the files. There are 3 soundtrack files with MP3 files that were downloaded with Napster.
2. Double click the elevation.fla file to open it. Notice that the sound file starts playing on frame 5 of the timeline. It is recommended by many flash experts that if you are using a long sound file, such as these, it is better to start the sound on frame 5 than frame 1 because it gives the Flash Player a chance to download the first few frames of the sound to load before it starts streaming.



3. Speaking of streaming, click on frame 5 in the timeline. Look at the sound settings in the Properties Panel. Notice that the sync is set to stream. When a sound is set to stream, it will play as the rest of the file is downloading in the background.

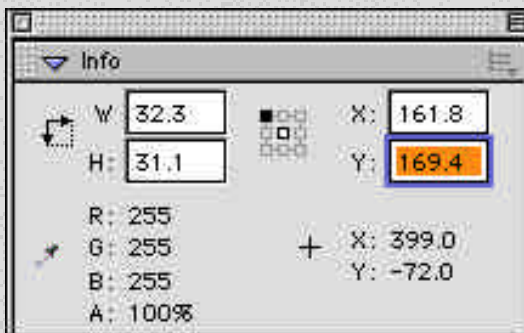


4. Open the Library.
5. Double click on the sound file in the library.
6. In the Sound Properties dialog box, take a look at the Compression setting. You have a few choices here, some old some new. The MP3 format can really compress your file and make it small, but the quality will be pretty horrible.
7. Uncheck the Use document default quality. Now you'll have some options for Bit Rate and Quality. The lower the bit rate, the smaller the file size.



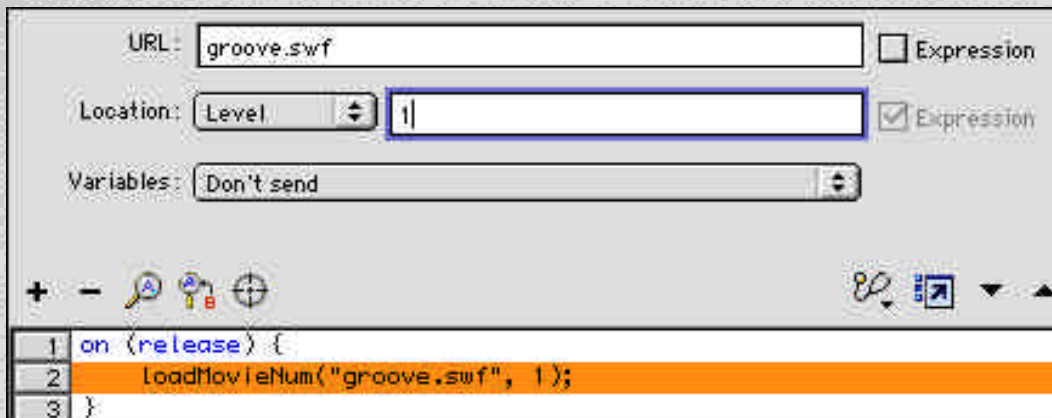
- For Bit Rate, select an option to determine the maximum bit rate of the sound produced by the MP3 encoder. Flash supports 8 kbps through 160 kbps CBR (constant bit rate). When you are exporting music, set the bit rate to 16 Kbps or higher for the best results.
 - For Preprocessing, select Convert Stereo to Mono to convert mixed stereo sounds to mono (monaural). (Mono sounds are unaffected by this option.)
 - Note: The Preprocessing option is available only if you select a bit rate of 20 Kbps or higher.
 - For Quality, select an option to determine the compression speed and sound quality:
 - Fast yields faster compression but lower sound quality.
 - Medium yields somewhat slower compression but higher sound quality.
 - Slow yields the slowest compression and the highest sound quality.
8. Then click on the Test button. Flash will compress the sound with the settings that you have selected and then will play the file so you can hear the quality.

9. Try a number of different settings to experiment.
10. When you are done close the file.
11. Open the Controller.fla file.
12. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the layout of the layers, the labels, and the actions involved. Here there are only 3 artists listed, but you could easily expand on this.
13. There are buttons in place that will take you to each artists page. You will see a picture of the artist. It will be your job to set up the play and stop buttons for each sound file.
14. Select frame 5 of the buttons layer. Press F6.
15. Click on frame 5 of the buttons layer.
16. Drag an instance of the gel Stop button onto the stage.
17. Use the Info palette to position the Stop button at x: 161.8 and y: 169.4.

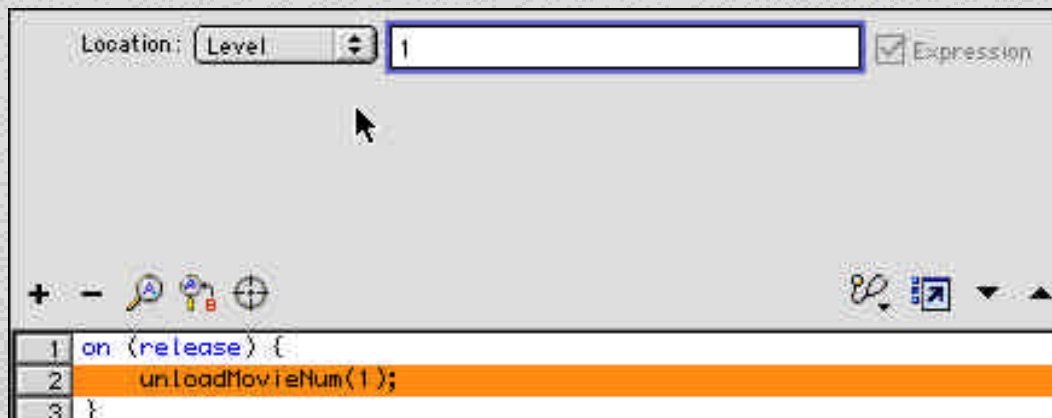


18. Drag an instance of the gel Right button onto the stage.
19. Use the Info palette to position the Play button at x: 192.8 and y: 169.4.
20. Select frame 10 of the timeline and press F6.
21. Select frame 15 and press F6. This duplicates all the buttons on the previous keyframes.
22. Select frame 5 of the buttons layer. Deselect any items that are selected by clicking off the stage.
23. Click on the Play button.
24. In the Actions Panel, double click on Actions book and then double click on the Browser/Network book, then double click on the loadMovie action.
25. In the URL field type groove.swf.

26. In the location field type 1 and make sure that the pop-up is set to Level. The main timeline is located on level 0. Loading a movie into level 1 loads the movie right on top of it.



27. Click on the Stop button.
28. In the Actions Panel, double click on the unloadMovie action. This action only has 1 parameter, location. Set the location to 1. what this action will do is remove whatever swf file is playing in level 1. So if the swf file is removed, the sound will stop playing.



29. Click on frame 10 of the main timeline.
30. Repeat the above steps for the play and stop buttons using the following parameters: Play button – loadMovie = tantrick.swf into level1. Stop Button, same as the first one.
31. Click on frame 15 of the main timeline.
32. Set the Play button to load elevation.swf into level 1. Set the Stop button to unloadMovie level 1.
33. Go to the Control Menu to Test Movie. Make sure all of your play and stop buttons work.

Insiders Story

What's the rationale behind all of this loadMovie business? Optimized performance. The Controller movie is only 172K. That's a little large for Flash, but I didn't use optimized bitmaps for it. It's the sound movies that are really big, 500k and under. On a 56K modem, that might take a long time to download. If all of the sound files and the controller were placed into a single movie, that would push the file size over a MegaByte easily.

So, instead of having the sound files inside the main timeline, we are loading them into level 1 above the main timeline only when the play button is released. Then, when the Stop button is activated, the sound file is removed from level 1. No movie, no sound. You could move throughout the main timeline and activate just the play button for each instance. When you do this, the sound that is currently playing is replaced with the new sound that is being loaded into Level 1. This is a much better approach to managing file size and anticipating download issues.