



Tutorial

EXPLOSIVE MUSIC WEBSITES

Why follow the crowd and use MySpace for your band's website when you can create something better and easier to manage with *Photoshop* and *GoLive*?

Creating a MySpace page for your band is as easy as falling off a log, but the difficulty is making it look good. MySpace is notorious for its unwieldy code and sparse CSS hooks, creating an uphill battle for anyone who wants their site to stand out from the crowd. By all means have a MySpace page for your band (it is, after all, seen as an increasingly important way to give your music some exposure), but if you want to be different and have a good-looking, easy-to-manage site to boot then the only thing to do is to build it yourself.

If you're fairly comfortable with HTML, you may want to manage news updates yourself, but if you're handing the design off to someone less technical, you can look at blogging software to act as a content management system. If you're an Adobe *GoLive* user, CS2 contains ready-made templates for the TypePad service, as well as Movable Type servers. Integrating a blog into your design can't compete with MySpace for simplicity, but you'll end up with a site that's fully under your control.

Sadly, Adobe's support for Movable Type and TypePad is patchy, with no mention of it at all in

GoLive's help menu. If things aren't working as expected, it's tough to figure out what the problem is. *Dreamweaver* enables you to install the Movable Type/HTML Editor extensions suite from <http://dreamweaver-mt.sourceforge.net>, but this can only be used in code view, making the *GoLive* solution marginally better.

Entrepreneurs and open source developers have made once troublesome issues, such as adding video, simplicity itself. Upload a video to YouTube, grab the embed tags from the site and paste it into your HTML and your band's video is available to anyone who visits your site (and YouTube, of course).

Look to Flickr to host your photos, who again usefully provide all the HTML code to add the images to your site. It's also a relatively painless process to set up a PayPal account to handle the shopping cart side of things for selling CDs and band T-shirts.

By using your website as a melting pot of available technologies, you get all the flexibility you could want without the technical or bandwidth headaches you might expect. >



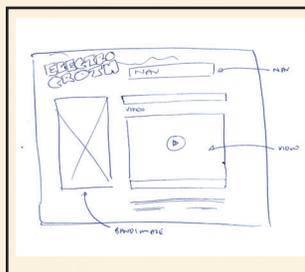
Expertise provided by Jason Arber, Founder of Pixelsurgeon (www.pixelsurgeon.com) and Creative Director at design and media agency Children of Finland (www.childrenofindland.com).



You'll find the Electro Crotch logo and a PSD file of the fictional website home page on the *Computer Arts Projects* CD88 in the Disc Content\Tutorials\Tutorial Files\Music website folder.

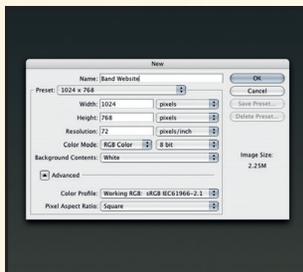
Part 1: Designing the site

Start by using *Photoshop* to build your band's website template...



Smart objects

Smart Objects are containers in which you can embed raster or vector image data, such as a logo from an *Illustrator* file. The embedded data retains its original characteristics and remains fully editable and you can scale, rotate and warp layers non-destructively in *Photoshop*. You can also apply transformations to Smart Objects as well as layer styles, opacity, blend modes and warps.

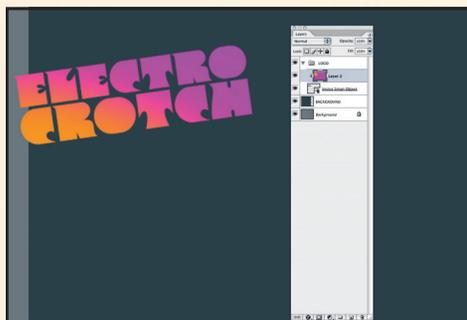


1 As with any design, it's always best to have a clear idea of the design before you start and there's no better starting point than a pen and paper. Even a rough layout will show you what works and what doesn't and ensures that you don't forget anything.

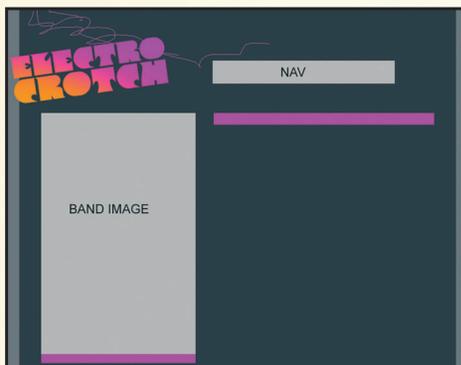
2 Once you're happy with your rough, it's time to fire up Adobe *Photoshop*. Create a new document (File>New...) with a width of 1024 pixels and a height of 768 pixels – the base monitor dimensions most of your visitors are likely to have – and set the resolution to 72 pixels/inch. Make sure the Colour Profile is sRGB, the colour space of the internet.

3 Although some people will still be using 800x600 screens to view your site, it's safe to assume that the vast majority of your potential audience will have 1024x768 or above. However, browser chrome will eat into this space, so the design will have to be narrower than that. Ensure that your design has a maximum width of 950 pixels.

4 In Adobe *Illustrator*, open the Electro Crotch logo (electrocrotch_logo.ai) from the *Computer Arts Projects* CD88. We'll be doing the colouring of the logo within *Photoshop* so there's no need to change the colour in *Illustrator*. For now, simply copy the logo (Edit>Copy) from the disc.



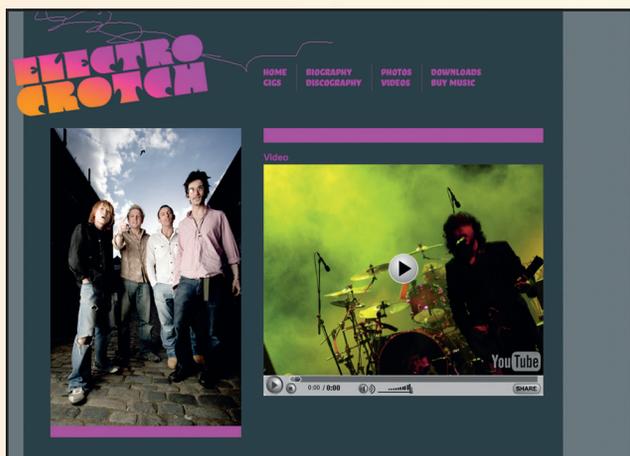
5 When pasting the logo into *Photoshop*, you should be presented with four options. Choose Smart Object, which pastes a rough preview onto the page which can be resized and rotated before being rendered. Smart objects can be resized at any point without losing quality. Create a clipping mask above the logo (Layer>Create Clipping Mask) and use vibrant pinks and oranges to fill the logo.



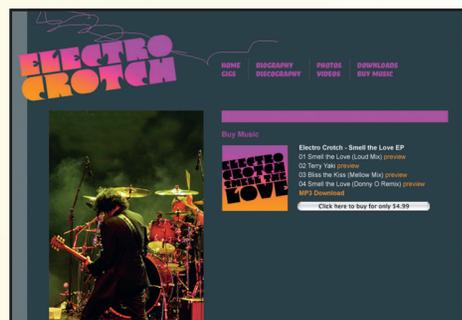
6 It's time to block in the basic elements on the page, such as the main photograph and the navigation using simple rectangles created with the Marquee tool or the Rectangle tool. This is so you can be sure that all the elements will sit nicely on the page before spending too long designing them.



7 Once you're happy with the size and position of the blocked in elements, you can start creating the actual designs. Some items, such as the photographs, can use the block rectangles by using clipping masks, while others, such as the navigation, will replace the blocks completely.



8 The home page, with its simple news layout, should be easy and straightforward to do. Break the page into several paragraphs, complete with a date stamp and subject. Other text-heavy pages will follow the same format. For video pages, we'll be using YouTube, so use an image from the site for the video player.



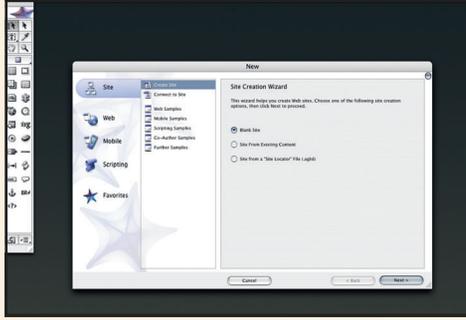
9 For the Buy Music page, you need to create a layout that includes details of the physical CD or music download for sale and a Buy Now button. PayPal allows you to design your own button, but other shopping cart software may have restrictions (see margin note).

Shopping cart

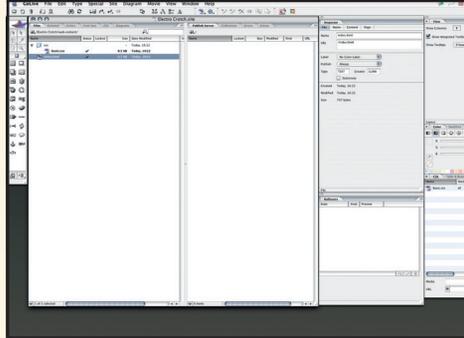
PayPal (www.paypal.com) offers a simple shopping cart solution that can be added to your site so that visitors can buy merchandise. Setting up an account involves PayPal making a couple of small deposits into your bank account that you must confirm, which may take several days. After that, you can start adding Buy Now buttons to your site.

Part 2: The build

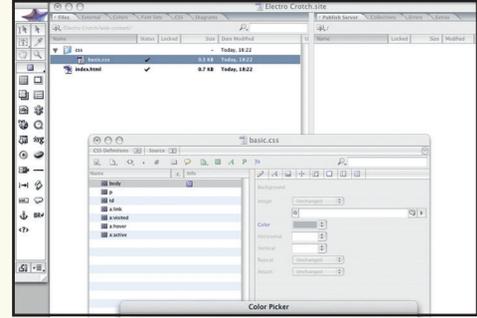
Use XHTML and CSS within Adobe *GoLive* to build the site's basic structure...



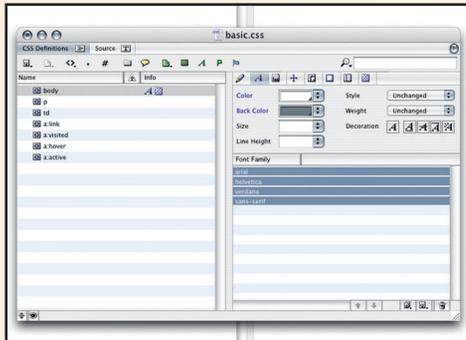
1 Use *GoLive*'s Site Creation Wizard to create a new website (File>New...). This keeps all your files together for easy editing and uploading. Choose Blank Site and click the next button to specify your site's name, location, FTP details and whether or not to use Version Control (if there's only you working on the site, you probably don't need Version Control).



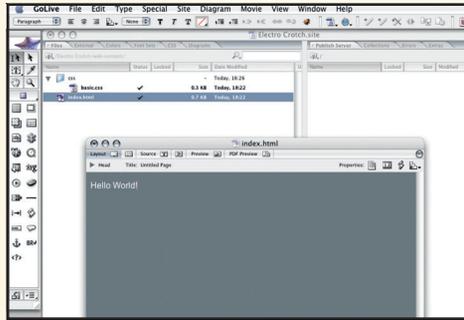
2 You should end up with a main site window that splits all the local files that are based on your computer on one side and the server on the other. It's possible to skip the FTP details, adding them at a later point, in which case the right-hand side will be blank.



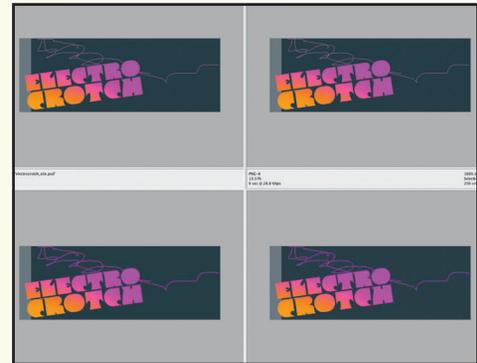
3 *GoLive* has usefully created an index.html page for you and a basic external CSS document. Opening the CSS document reveals a selection of basic tags that can be edited straight away. Choose the body tag and give the background a new colour based on an Eyedropper selection from the *Photoshop* document.



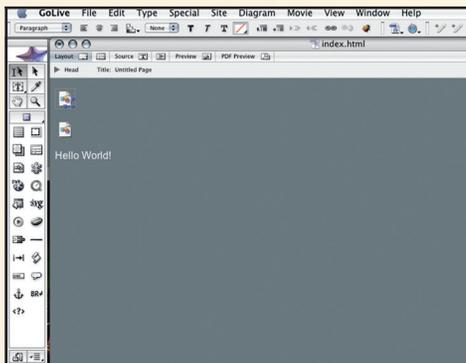
4 You can specify the font family and font colour with the body tag. With the basic.css document still open, click the 'A' symbol and choose white from the Colour dropdown menu. Choose Arial from the Font Family dropdown menu at the bottom of the palette. You can preview the effects your choices have in the Inspector palette.



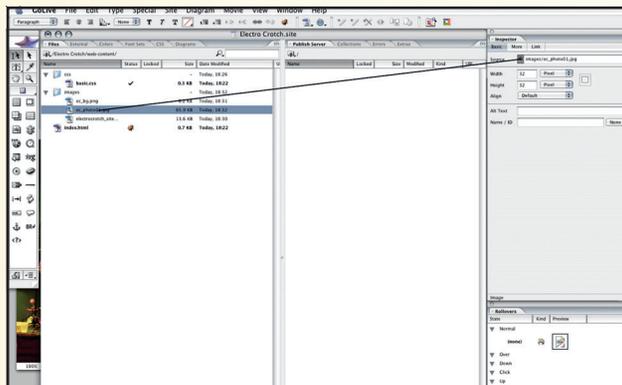
5 Save the basic.css document and open the index.html file. You should notice immediately that it has inherited the background colour you specified in Step 3. Typing a short phrase will demonstrate too that the text is formatted in the style you created in the previous step. This is because *GoLive* has automatically linked the CSS document to the HTML page, saving you a couple of steps.



6 Save the logo out from within *Photoshop* by cropping the file and exporting the image as a PNG via *Photoshop*'s Save for Web functionality (File>Save for Web...). 8-bit PNGs are a better solution than GIFs because they generally compress to much smaller sizes.



7 Back in Adobe *GoLive*, drag two image icons from the toolbar into the document. It doesn't matter if the images are above or below the text because we'll position them using CSS demonstrating what is known as Semantic Layout, which divorces the underlying content from its presentation.

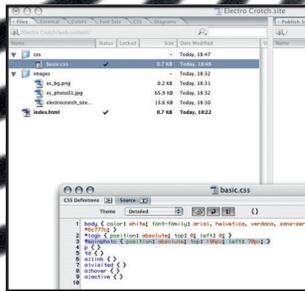


8 Click on one of the image icons, which should be listed as (EmptyReference!) in the Inspector palette. Use one of *GoLive*'s cool little tricks to rectify this. Click the tiny spiral icon next to the file name in the Inspector palette and drag it to the file you want to associate with it in the Site window.



9 Once you've done this for the logo and the main photo, swap to the Source view on the index.html page and wrap a pair of Divs around the images. Give each Div a unique, descriptive name, like this: <div id="logo"></div> and <div id="mainphoto"></div>.

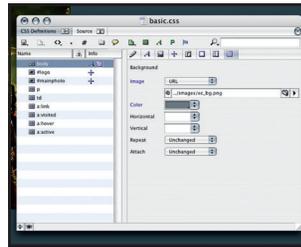
WEBSITES



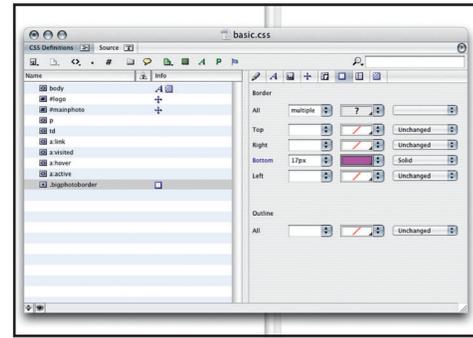
10 Open the basic.css file and click the Source view and add your two new Divs, giving them a position attribute of Absolute (which fixes them to the page), then a top and left value to place it specifically. You can get the positions by measuring the *Photoshop* template: #logo { position: absolute; top: 0; left: 0; } #mainphoto { position: absolute; top: 196px; left: 70px; }



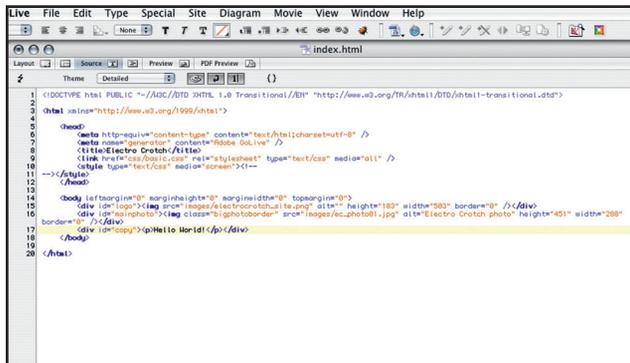
11 Saving the CSS file and flipping back to the layout mode shows that the images have now snapped to their new positions. The text ("Hello World") appears to have vanished, but it's actually underneath the logo graphic. We'll return to the text later, but first we need to look at the background.



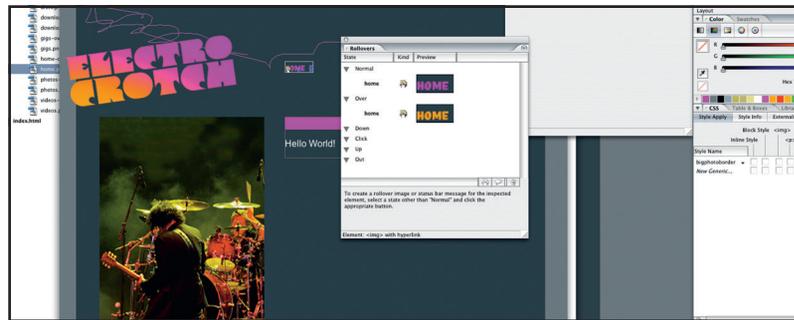
12 The background currently has a flat colour, but we'd like a darker strip to go down the middle of the page. All we need is a 1-pixel-high strip saved as a PNG. Returning to the basic.css page, click the body tag followed by the icon for Background Properties. In the Image dropdown choose URL and link the background PNG. In the Repeat dropdown select the Repeat Y option. This repeats the 1-pixel-high tile along the Y axis.



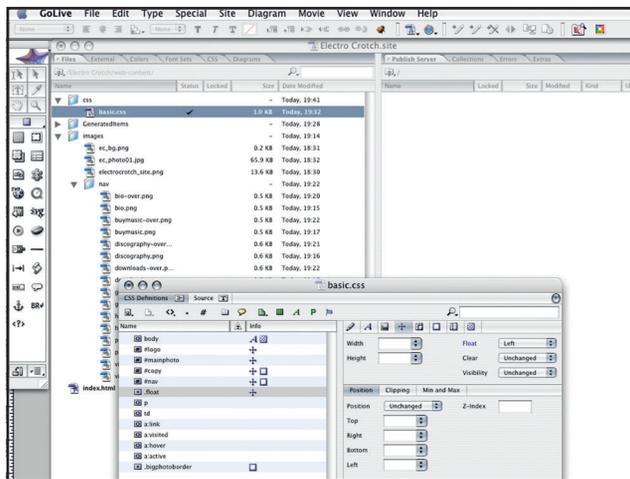
13 In the design, the photo had a thick pink border at the bottom of the image. We could use a graphic for this or include it as part of the image, but to save file size and for maximum flexibility we can create a class. In the basic.css page, click the Create New CSS Statement button and choose New Class Style. In the Border and Outline properties section, create a 17-pixel, pink, solid border along the bottom and save the file.



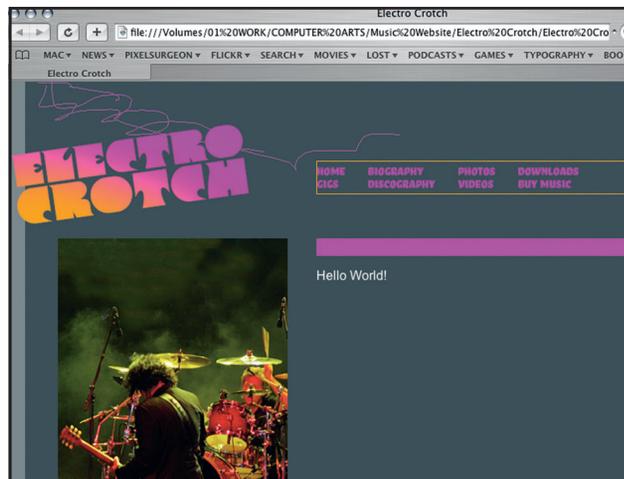
14 In the source view, the new pink border is easy to apply with a simple class="bigphotoborder" within the img tag. While you're there, slap a Div tag around the text with an ID tag so that you start to position and style it: <div id="copy"><p>Hello World!</p></div>



15 In the basic.css page, create a new ID: #copy with an Absolute position and top and left coordinates. Include a 22-pixel-high, pink, solid border along the top and save. The text should now spring into position and have a thick pink rule above it. Specify a width of 425 pixels for the copy Div to make the pink rule that length. For the navigation, create PNGs for each menu item in both normal and rollover states. Name the rollover PNGs with -over at the end, such as home-over.png. GoLive knows that when you drag an image file that has a companion file named "-over" that it should use that graphic as the rollover state.



16 Group the nav image files into four separate Divs that are tall enough so the images sit on top of each other within a single Div. To ensure that the sub-Divs sit next to each other create a class, whose only attribute is Float: Left. Apply to the sub-Divs: <div class="float">



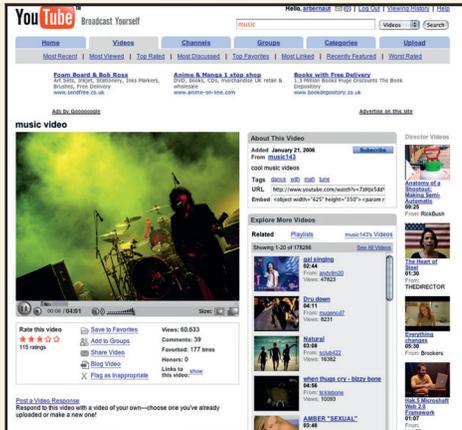
17 You can't always see the borders of your Divs, but you can apply temporary ones with CSS so you ensure everything is positioned as expected. Test your page in as many browsers as you can, including Internet Explorer on a PC. When you're happy, you can use the index page as the basis for other pages within the site.

Adding video
A short time ago, embedding video into your website was fraught with difficulties, such as deciding which format to use. A popular video could burn through your available bandwidth leaving your website unavailable. Thanks to YouTube (www.youtube.com), and similar services such as MetaCafe (www.metacafe.com) it's now simple to embed videos hosted on their sites into yours: you get all the benefits without the bandwidth headaches.

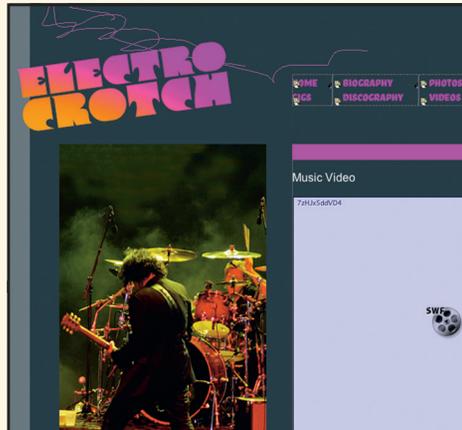
Part 3: Adding media

Time to add video, a shopping cart and TypePad integration...

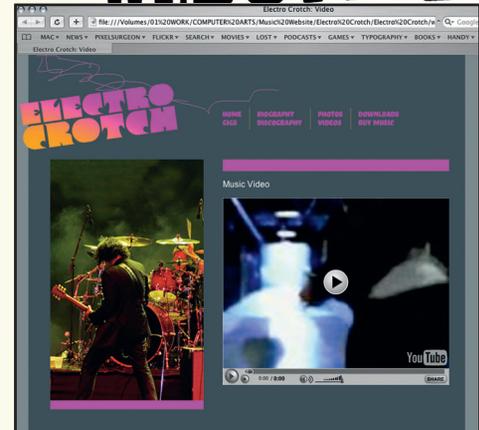
EXPLOSIVE MUSIC WEBSITES



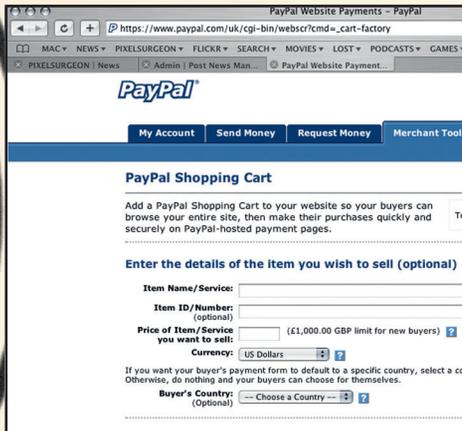
1 You can add a music video to your site by simply creating an account with YouTube, uploading your video in Divx format then going to your YouTube page and copying the code found in the Embed section of 'About This Video'.



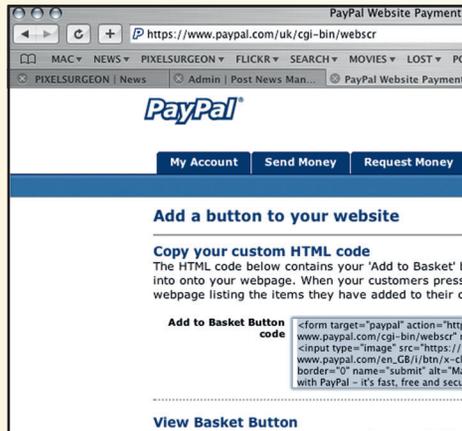
2 Back in GoLive, copy the code where you would like the video to appear in your site. It's important that you do this in the source view and not in the layout view, because pasting code in the latter won't work. Once you've inserted the code, you can swap to layout mode and carry on working.



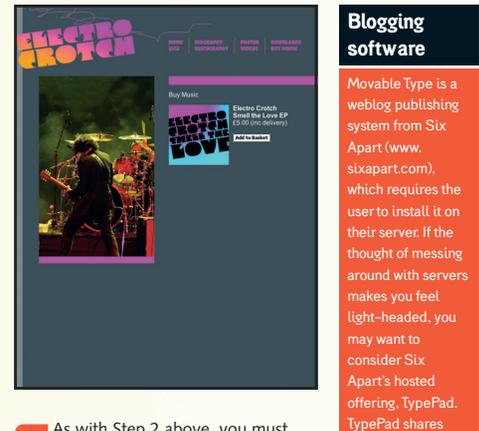
3 Preview the page in your web browser to ensure that it works as expected. The YouTube video is in .FLV format and requires the most recent versions of the Flash player to work. This is the most popular web plug-in, so the vast majority of your visitors will be able to see your video with no problems.



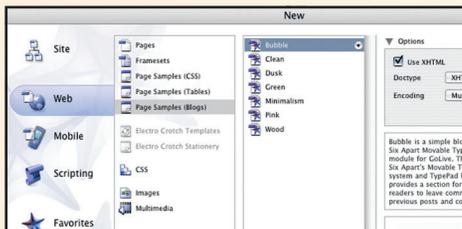
4 Adding a shopping cart with PayPal is simplicity itself. You need to specify a URL that visitors land on when the transaction is complete and then you can fill in the details of the item for sale in the PayPal Shopping Cart page in the Merchant Tools section of the PayPal site.



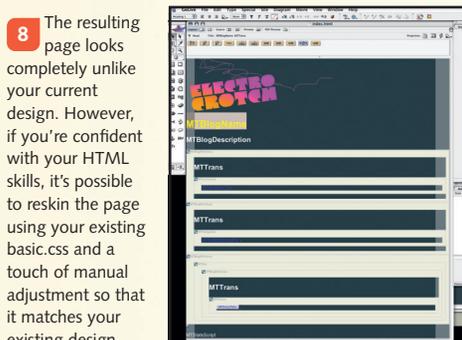
5 Once you've filled in all the details, PayPal generates custom code for you to insert into your website. This is essentially a simple form with pre-baked variables and so should work in virtually every web browser. PayPal even generates a View Basket button if you need it.



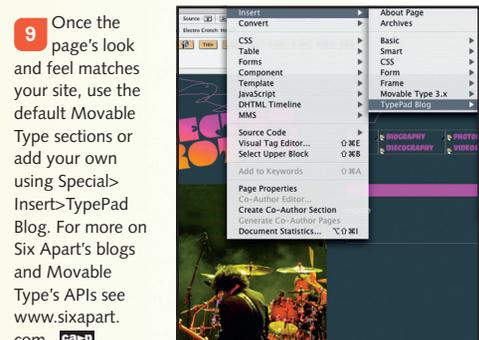
6 As with Step 2 above, you must paste the code into your site in source view. Preview your page to ensure it works. PayPal's default buttons are not very inspiring, but you can go back to PayPal and use your own button designs, should you wish.



7 If you want to use Movable Type or TypePad on your site, you need to create a blog template in GoLive (File>New...>Page Samples (Blog)>Bubble). This creates a page with all the necessary hooks into Six Apart's blogging APIs. Click OK.



8 The resulting page looks completely unlike your current design. However, if you're confident with your HTML skills, it's possible to reskin the page using your existing basic.css and a touch of manual adjustment so that it matches your existing design.



9 Once the page's look and feel matches your site, use the default Movable Type sections or add your own using Special>Insert>TypePad Blog. For more on Six Apart's blogs and Movable Type's APIs see www.sixapart.com.

Bloggng software

Movable Type is a weblog publishing system from Six Apart (www.sixapart.com), which requires the user to install it on their server. If the thought of messing around with servers makes you feel light-headed, you may want to consider Six Apart's hosted offering, TypePad. TypePad shares many of the features and APIs of its more complex cousin, but is marketed at non-technical users.