

Maple's Grand New Look

BY BARRY SIMON

It takes a lot to impress most jaded software reviewers, especially with a product that we first reviewed in 1989. But we were totally blown away by Maplesoft's **Maple 10** mathematical package. The user interface has been so completely revamped that the

software feels like a totally different product—more like Mathcad on steroids than the old command-line application.

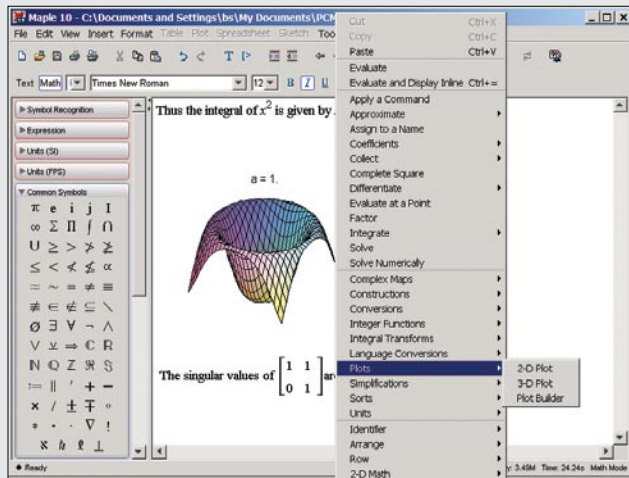
You can start up Maple in four modes—two old and two new. There is a DOS-like command line, what Maple calls Classic Worksheet (its old way of

placing text around the command line), and a spiffy new scientific graphing calculator—the most powerful you'll ever meet. But the star mode is the fourth, a new interface called Document mode, where you enter text and math as if you were in a technical word processor, with the ability to evaluate expressions using right-click menus. Symbols can be entered from palettes, or you can draw them on a tablet or with a mouse.

To give the product even more of a Mathcad feel, you can change input data and hit a single button to recalculate the rest of the document you've produced. But underneath, you have a raw mathematical power matched only by Mathematica—complete symbolic algebra and calculus and oodles of built-in functions. Another important

new element in the Maple world is the soon-to-be-released MapleNet, which allows the posting of native Maple worksheets on the Web so they can be read by a browser even if the client PC is not running Maple.

Of course, the new interface goes only so far, and for really complicated actions you'll need to go to a command line. And this first iteration of Document mode has some rough edges. Some tasks, such as how to place limits on integrals, are not well documented. But on the whole, this is an impressive leap in making the potency of a full-blown symbolic powerhouse available to users who don't want to cope with a command line.



IN DOCUMENT MODE, Maple 10's command line is replaced by extensive right-click menus.

Maple 10

\$1,995 direct, Maplesoft, www.maplesoft.com. ●●●●●

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To view a series of Maple 10 interactive demos visit: www.maplesoft.com/products/maple/demo.

Single user licenses are available from the Maplesoft Web store: webstore.maplesoft.com.

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