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ROM is issued
six-times
a year to
members of the
Guildford PC
User Group
All Contributions
to the Editor
Tony Hawes
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ROM

Newsletter of the Guildford PC User Group

Editor's Bit

Apologies

June Meeting. Apologies but through no fault of our own, Ross Carter who was down to talk and had agreed to demonstrate his own "Vectrasoft" web authoring program, didn't turn up for the meeting he was scheduled to talk to. His web author program is a code-only editor for Windows that allows you to create professional looking Web pages using simple scripting commands instead of HTML. As he mentioned when he agreed to talk to the Group, Vectrasoft is ideal for both professional and beginners, small businesses, education, clubs and organisations; but without him available to demo his program we will never know how well it works.

Your editor normally has a standby option and he stood in at VERY short notice to demonstrate the features of the new Epson Stylus Photo R2880 printer previewed in last month's ROM. So the evening was not a total washout.

My personal apologies as well, but because of other commitments this issue of ROM is later than planned. Having to do the bulk of the reviewing this month means editing ROM has been more demanding than normal. However two new or upgraded Video Editing programs have come in for review: Pinnacle Studio 12 Ultimate and Magix Movie Edit Pro 14. Reviews in this issue.

Secretary's Notes

July Meeting — Relational Databases. The talk on Monday 14 July was given by Dennis Skinner and Frances Jacques on producing a relational data base using Microsoft Access. Dennis explained that in the 1970's separate programs or tables were produced to cover a particular event or in a company a particular project. It was not until the 1980's or 1990's that tables were being produced to use the same facts for a number of purposes or combining one set of facts with another. These tables are part of a relational database and Microsoft Access is a relational management system.

Dennis outlined a number of tables (about 13) associated with cycle racing. They covered such things as participants, venue, race length, clubs, race dates etc. and he outlined how they could be associated for a particular race..

Frances then demonstrated how the tables are created in Access, how the fields are specified, the properties of each field are set and the data type for the data the field will store. When all the tables are completed the information for a particular race at a particular venue can be set up by creating Multiple Table Queries which he demonstrated. Frances also showed how handicaps can be calculated using Excel and added by the use of a basic query.

Although the tables require detailed setting up which is time consuming the series of tables can be used for

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ROM is now only available as a full-colour .pdf download from the Group web page at:
www.guildfordpcusergroup.co.uk

**NEXT MEETING — Monday
8th September 2008 at 7.45 p.m.**

**Acer Aspire 8920G (Gemstone)
Notebook with an 18.4-inch
screen and Dolby surround sound**

The Acer Aspire 8920G (Gemstone Blue) notebook with its 18.4-inch screen, Dolby sound and Blu-ray DVD. A high-end Multimedia laptop.

We have Dolby encoded Blu-Ray Video discs to demo, plus other features to demo too — an excellent chance to see it in action

Spread the word and please bring a friend — coffee, tea & chocolate biscuits are free.

**Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday
of each month at 7.45pm at the
Stoughton Youth Club and Community
Centre (opposite "The Royal" — Pub)
Worplesdon Road (A322), Guildford.**

Forthcoming Meetings

Monday 13th October 2008 at 7.45 pm. A Christmas Presents pre-view followed by a practical demo of Nuance's "Dragon Naturally Speaking 10" — the latest version.

Monday 10th November 2008 at 7.45 pm. Nero's latest — "Nero 9" — see it in action.

Monday 8th December 2008 at 7.45 pm. Our Annual Christmas Quiz, with prizes up for grabs.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries or questions about the Guildford PC User Group and its activities please contact the following members of the committee:

Chairman (and Editor)

Tony Hawes

For Contact details see the entry under Editor (below).

Secretary & Public Relations

Bryce McCrerrick

Surrey Place,

5 Coach House Gardens,

FLEET, GU51 4QX

Tel: 01252 623422

e-mail: b.mccrerrick@ntlworld.com

Treasurer

Francis Jacques

"Sampford", Elmstead Road,

WEST BYFLEET, KT14 6BJ

Tel: 01932 341888

e-mail: francis.jacques@virgin.net

Web Master

Laurence Fenn

84 St George's Road,

ALDERSHOT, GU12 4LJ

Tel: 01252 330408

e-mail: laurence@orchardoo.com

Laurence's Web Page:

<http://www.orchardoo.com>

(this site contains many of the reviews that have appeared in ROM)

Group Web Page:

www.guilfordpcusergroup.co.uk

Meeting Room Key Holder

Tony Hawes

Details below

EDITOR (and Chairman)

Tony Hawes

25 Folly Close, FLEET, GU52 7LN

Tel: 01252 617962

Fax: 01252 664756

Mobile: 07941 778007

e-mail: thawes@ntlworld.com

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many events and can be updated as required. Frances has not yet completed the whole procedure but promised to demonstrate the complete operation at a later meeting. Members will remember on Monday 8 October 2007 Frances demonstrating on Excel and Access a program he had developed for a single race with up to 120 participants. This new program takes the documentation much further with a more general application. Frances, our treasurer, enjoys cycle racing in his spare time.

Editor's Bit — Continued

August is of course the month of silly stories and stupid jokes, so I think I can but draw your attention to some of the dead-month of August stories that caught my eye.



Lord Nelson performed many duties for his country, not least keeping the sea lanes clear for our prosperous slave trade. But now it appears that he might have done us the greatest service ever, fully 200 years after his death.

Scientists have been studying the ships' logs of Nelson and Captain Cook and can now reveal that global warming is not so unusual after all.

The Met Office, an organisation normally so timid that it forecasts "sunshine and showers with spells of heavy rain and sleet... and hail... and snow" on a daily basis (and then gets blamed for no one choosing to take their summer hols in a wet and windy August). Has stuck its metaphorical head into the hornet's nest of political correctness and announced that after studying the weather conditions recorded in more than 6,000 naval logs dating back to 1600, we actually went through a period of global warming during the 1730s similar to that which we're experiencing today.

Forgive my historical ignorance, but I think I'm on safe ground when I say that 4 x 4s were thin on the ground in the 1730s. So were coal-fired or nuclear power stations, cheap flights to the continent, plasma televisions and super-market carrier bags. Even then polar bears were chucking themselves off crumbling glaciers and a mad prince, heir to the throne, wibbled on about the impact of carthorse emissions on the environment to any plant in his

garden prepared to listen.

So, we're being conned. Your car isn't being taxed to extinction and your bins aren't being emptied to stop global warming. It's always happened and it always will. These things go in cycles, and our own influence on our own environment is tiny and ineffectual in the grander scale.

Still, as long as it gives the government an excuse to tax us to the hilt, then no one in authority is going to let the real story have any credence.

Think about that the next time you're stood in front of a Dalek-like row of multi-coloured recycling bins trying to decide if a cornflakes packet is 'waxed cardboard', 'treated cardboard', or just plain 'cardboard cardboard', knowing that a £110 fine will be winging your way if you get it wrong.

PS. Just as I finished this issue we had Dr Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), say people should have one meat-free day to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The economist (not a scientist), who is vegetarian, said diet change was important in reducing environmental problems associated with rearing cattle and other animals.

Dying for a Salad? — Try This

Writing in something called Healthy and Organic Living magazine, a top-shelf title if ever I've seen one, celebrity bearded chef Antony Worrall Thompson recommended a weed called henbane as "a great addition to salads".

One small problem: henbane, which is related to deadly nightshade, is a classified poison that can cause hallucinations, convulsions and a rapid heart rate. Indeed, dear old Dr Crippen used henbane to make the poison with which to kill his wife.



Poor Antony, pictured, has since been reviled in the national press for his homicidal carelessness. I, however, regard him as a hero.

For all we know, Thompson could be a double agent: a man devoted to the cause of allowing the yoghurt-knitting bunny-huggers who read dangerous propaganda such as Healthy and Organic Living magazine to exterminate themselves by eating such delicious dishes as ragwort trifle and red-and-white spotted mushroom risotto. And that's natural selection.

Want more evidence? Scientists have announced that vegetarian men who eat even a small amount of soya-based products (e.g. Linda McCartney's sausages) have a lower sperm count than that of meat-eating men.

There is only one possible outcome to this – nutters will be less successful at breeding than normal people and will eventually, inevitably, die out, like the dodo and the dinosaur.

(Continued on page 3)



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Henbane — Background

Henbane, whose botanical name is *Hyoscyamus niger*, is a member of the *Solanaceae* order of plants which includes such innocuous members as the humble potato and tomato but also highly poisonous and notorious ones such as belladonna, mandrake and the daturas. It is one of the legendary “witch” plants, renowned in folklore for its claimed magical qualities and it features in many of the recipes for witches’ flying ointments which have been preserved in the records of witch trials and various other sources.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the plant makes its appearance in the English language as *henne-belle*, a form which is recorded as early as 1,000 AD in the writings both of *Æfric* and subsequently in a number of early English medical manuscripts of the 11th century. It seems likely that this form derived at least in part from the bell-shape of the plant’s flowers. The more familiar (and modern) form *henbane* was first recorded in the mid 13th century. The *-bane* part refers to an archaic Old English word for death, so the name as a whole refers to a belief that poultry, most notably hens, were particularly vulnerable to the effects of eating its seeds.

Our Soggy Summer

Normally at this time of the year, drink in hand, I’d be sunning myself besides the pool, but not this year. Which meant I had to retreat to the shelter of the conservatory and read a book or two. So scanning the newspaper book reviews I came on this new book, “Traffic: Why We Drive The Way We Do (And What It Says About Us)” by Tom Vanderbilt.

This has some absolute gems as to why we love (and hate) our cars so much. For example the number of pedestrian KSIs (killed or seriously injured) on Kensington High Street in London fell by 60% when the council removed most of the “safety” features — road markings, railings and signs. Why? Because these devices take responsibility away from the driver or pedestrian. They make them feel they are being looked after so they take stupid risks and die. The apparently safe road is, the research tells us, the most lethal.

Like the discoveries that dieting makes you fat, that economists cannot make predictions and that Einstein was probably right about the cosmological constant, the Kensington High Street experiment overturns a century of misconception. From the man with the red flag onwards, the assumption was that the car was inhuman. It had to be caged with safety precautions and its ravenous appetite for space demanded priority in towns and villages. Like a god, it was worshipped and feared. So much so it led to stupid inconsistencies as shown in the photo above of a junction on the A3 in New Malden.

In the new traffic thinking Tom Vanderbilt also makes the claim that it’s not only air-bags and safety belts we should have in a car — he suggests the most effective safety device that could be fitted inside a car would be a dagger pointing at the driver from the centre of the steering wheel — more dangerous is more safe.

Penguin on Parade

They stood ramrod-straight on parade, desperate to impress the VIP. After all it’s not every day you’re inspected by a penguin with a knighthood.

Sir Nils Olav, a resident of Edinburgh Zoo, was given his honour on behalf of King Harald of Norway in a ceremony attended by 130 Norwegian Royal Guardsmen as the knighthood was gently clipped to his wing.

Olav, a king penguin, is the third generation of his kind to enjoy a unique relationship with the Guards, who adopted his predecessor in 1962.



King penguin Nils Olav ‘inspects’ the Norwegian King’s Guard after he was given a knighthood at Edinburgh zoo. August 2008.

Pinnacle Studio 12 — Ultimate Edition

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

Introduction

As a regular user of Pinnacle's Studio video editing program going back as far as Pinnacle Studio version 8 about eight years ago and the various upgrades since, I am always keen to see what Pinnacle have to offer in their regular upgrades which this year in 2008 reaches version 12.

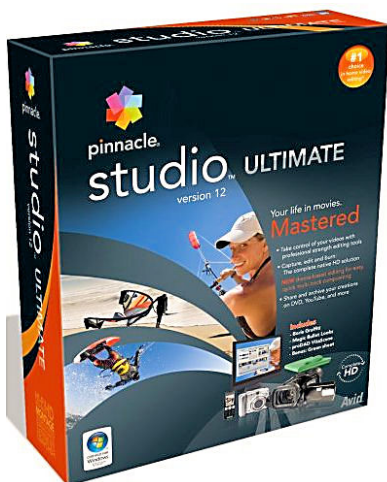
As with the earlier versions, with its ease of use Studio has always been aimed at novices, but hidden away are all the features necessary to allow those with video editing aspirations to advance way beyond the novice stage. The launch of Studio 12 a month or so ago whetted my appetite to see what's new — and as you'll see from my review I was not disappointed.

Studio 12 — New Features

As Pinnacle say in their Press Release: Pinnacle Studio version 12 builds on the features that have established the Pinnacle Studio family as number one in the consumer video editing market in the U.S. and Europe. The new version includes Pinnacle Montage, an innovative tool that makes high-end compositing and animation effects accessible to consumers. With more than 25 new features, version 12 adds many new capabilities requested by users, while still maintaining the ease of use that has become the hallmark of Pinnacle Studio products. More titles, DVD menus and templates have been added as well as new professional audio and video controls and a complete HD workflow with Blu-ray authoring in certain versions of Pinnacle Studio version 12.

The Pinnacle Studio version 12 family consists of three affordably priced versions to meet the needs of consumers ranging from novices to dedicated video enthusiasts. In addition to Pinnacle Studio, the basic version, Pinnacle offers Studio Plus and Studio Ultimate with more advanced audio and video tools, including a complete HD workflow.

Pinnacle Studio version 12 Beta users say the new photo and video Pinnacle Montage feature alone makes the upgrade worthwhile. Designed to make it easy to achieve high-end results with multiple video layers, animated text and graphics, the Pinnacle Montage feature includes more than 11 pre-defined themes with over 80 single templates. In addition, all Pinnacle Studio version 12 products now offer marker tools for the timeline. Format compatibility has also been expanded to include photo import in Photoshop's native PSD format and the GIF format. With the new export options, users can create MP3, Flash Video, WAV and 3GP files or upload files direct to YouTube.



Addressing the features most requested by customers, Pinnacle Studio version 12 now incorporates advanced capabilities for audio, with numerical audio volume, master volume controls, a timeline VU meter and peak indicators. New convenience features include the ability to reference images in the album and direct crop control to automatically remove black bars of a video or image. The new version also offers improved effects performance on lower-end PCs, advanced 2D editing, the ability to rotate effects and new content for titles and DVD menus.

Among the first to offer native HDV and AVCHD editing software, Pinnacle Systems Studio Plus and Ultimate now includes new Blu-ray disc burning capabilities in BD-MV with motion menus. AVCHD 1920 and support for various HD camcorder types including JVC full HD, Canon Vixia and Sanyo Xacti.

Designed for the most serious video enthusiasts, Pinnacle Studio Ultimate version 12 also includes:

- A green sheet for Chroma keying effects and comes with three of the industry's most highly acclaimed professional video tools:
- ProDAD Vitascene (around £200 value) — a complete library of highly customizable transitions and lighting effects. The effects include film looks, blurs, glows, sparkles, and glass effects. Transitions include film effects, ripples, wipes, sparkle and starburst dissolves, and many others.
- Red Giant Software Magic Bullet Looks (around £200 value) — a powerful tool for adjusting tone, colour and focus to simulate the appearance of classic films or specific production conditions. Offers more than 100 simple-to-apply presets to match common looks found in television programs, commercials, and motion pictures.

- Boris Graffiti (around £150 value) — the 2D/3D vector title animation plug-in that includes text on a path, jitter, randomization, independent vector text, advanced type-on title animation and automated rolls, crawls, fades and zooms. Comes with hundreds of presets to streamline title creation.

Video Editing — the Basics

Basically you use editing to manipulate your video footage to produce a final presentation quality video. Editing allows you to trim, order, add audio (narration, background music and appropriate sound effects), add titles, add transitions, add still photos and process your clips. With practice good editing can transform dull and uninteresting footage into an interesting final result.

Edits are not done randomly. Both theory and practical know-how are necessary, the process involves dedication and attention to detail; be prepared to spend a lot of time editing your video. If really dedicated it often takes up to one hour of work to put together a couple of minutes of good completed footage, but with experience this ratio will reduce dramatically. The more you work with video and learn to edit, the more you'll understand why a 100-minute Hollywood film can often take a whole year to produce, shoot and edit. However for basic home movie editing the time necessary to put together a worthwhile video depends on how much you want to put into the project and this depends on three vital factors:

1. The length of the original footage
2. Extras to be added to the project such as audio, titles, transitions, still photos etc
3. The planned length of your finished movie

One thing I noticed is that assembling and editing can be an addictive process; I find I always want to improve on what I've already done and the time involved in editing can go through the roof as you strive for that finished masterpiece!

Video Editing Techniques — What's Involved?

1. Capture the video. From video camera (digital video or analogue), VHS, TV, or import digital video files saved to your hard disk.
2. If not captured direct from your camcorder's output socket convert the video to VCD, SVCD, DVD / MPEG video.
3. Edit the MPEG video by adding and arranging clips, trimming and rearranging as necessary. Add transitions, still pictures, sounds and DVD menus.
4. Burn the authored video, usually directly after authoring in step 3.
5. Play the burnt video on your DVD Player.

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Figure 1: Capture from a DV Camcorder. When connected with a FireWire cable the on-screen mini controls control the Camcorder.

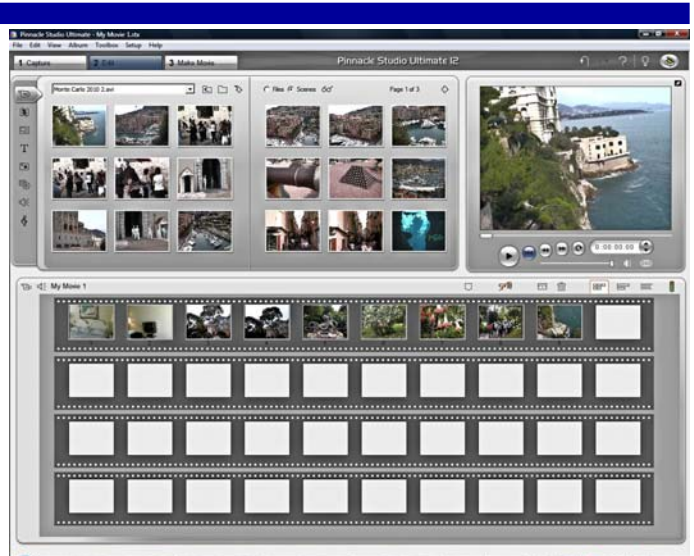


Figure 2: The Album screen, note the tabs along the top for "Capture", "Edit" and "Make-Movie." Imported and detected clips top left and centre. The clip being previewed top right, and below on the Storyboard the clips that have been dragged down for editing

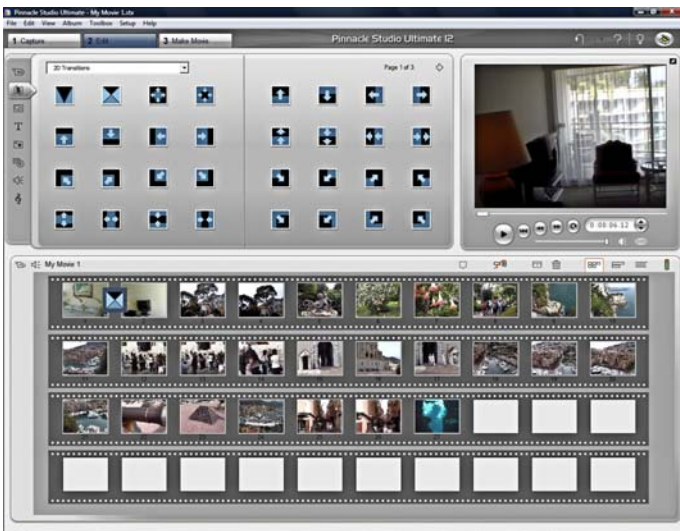


Figure 3: Transitions dragged and dropped between clips to smooth the transition from one scene to the next

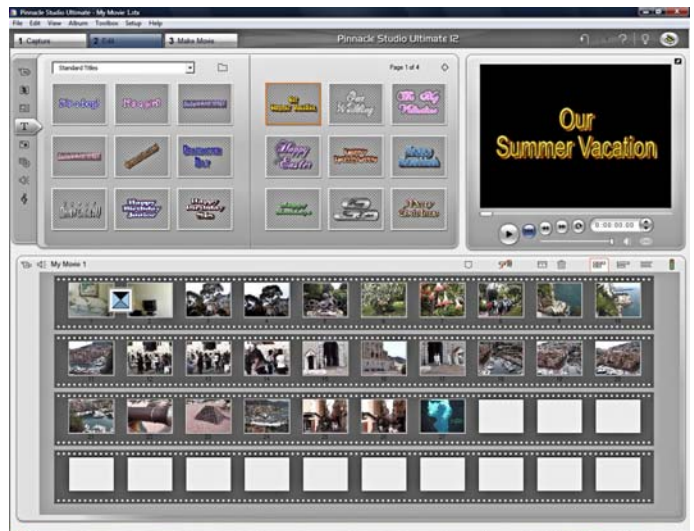


Figure 4: The Title Edit screen. Titles can be edited and amended and then dragged into the storyboard as required.

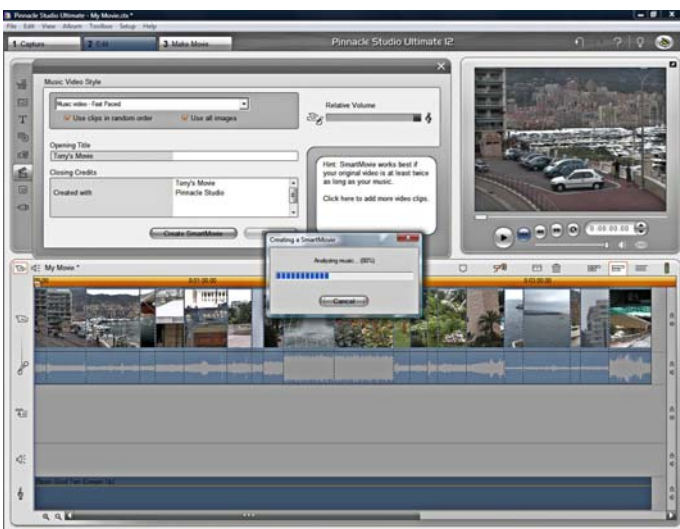


Figure 5: Creating a SmartMovie where Studio creates an automatic rendition of your video; placing an Opening Title and Closing Credits title in the right places, adding transitions as necessary and creating a music soundtrack — very nifty!

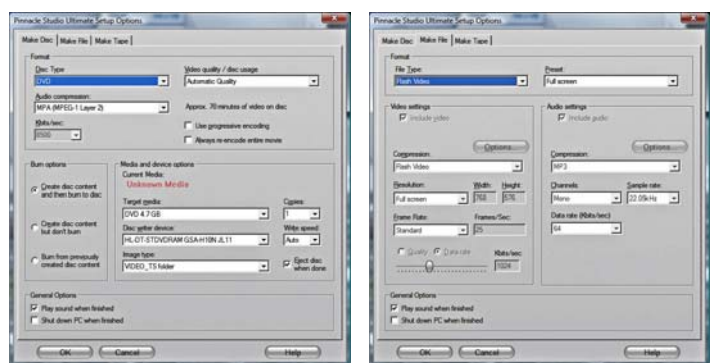


Figure 6: Ready to render and burn your video to a DVD (left) and creating a Flash-video file for uploading to YouTube (right).

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In Use — Pinnacle Studio 12 Ultimate

When you first run Pinnacle Studio 12 the intro screen gives you the option of opening the program or running an expert tutorial which shows how to use the program.

Once you open the program the Pinnacle interface is simple. The Album view is a place for loading video, still image, and audio files —the basic assets of your project which are collected into separate tab-selected folders before integrating them into your projects. There are three tabs:

1. Capture: Capture is simple and is where you import your video footage from DV camera or file for editing (Fig. 1).
2. Edit: Edit accesses the editing screen
3. Make Movie: The Make Movie tab is last and is used once you've finished the edit and are ready to burn your project to DVD, CD, Tape or File.

Studio 12's Album screen is where the editing takes place (Fig. 2). The imported clips which Studio has automatically split using scene detection appear as thumbnails at the top left and centre; top right is the preview screen of the currently running clip and below is the Storyboard showing clips you've dragged down from the imported clips at the top.

Once you've transferred footage to your computer, you're ready to start editing your work. The first step of this process involves splitting and trimming video into discrete clips. These edited clips are the building blocks for construction of your final video. Most modern video editing programs offer some type of automatic scene detection during capture. When importing DV footage from you DV camera, the scene detection feature automatically splits your footage into individual scenes by automatically detecting the breaks where you pressed the record button on your video camera.

The Album

Once you've done this Studio presents your imported clips in the Album (see Fig. 2). The Album is an integral component of Studio's interface: The Album also contains tools for transitions, titles, and menu-effects. The Album isn't a true bin or library, like those found in some programs that saves the imported assets in a project file, Studio's project file only records the file locations of the assets used and accesses these as necessary to compile your video. The Album simply displays the files available in the currently selected directory.

In my case I've imported eight minutes of holiday footage. The individual clips show where I pressed the camcorder record button. Had I imported a video .mpg file Studio would have detected large changes in colour or brightness in adjacent frames to determine where to split the video into usable clips. This method is not foolproof,

but I'm more than happy to let Studio produce a large number of splits at fairly arbitrary locations. Always when you import your footage into Studio there will be many clips that include scenes you don't want as well as the ones you want to use in your video. Trimming this material down into usable clips needs a firm resolve; discard any obviously flawed parts and shots that simply make no visual sense. Don't aim for final quality at this point. The goal here is to discard the obviously bad shots and reduce the video to usable pieces.

Transitions

Transitions are effects placed between video clips to help smooth the transition from one scene to another. In films or on TV, for example, when the screen fades to black at the end of a dramatic scene, then fades back in from black to the next scene, it's a fade transition. When two scenes blend together for a moment before the second scene appears clearly, it's a dissolve (Fig. 3). The most frequent transition is a cut, which is actually the absence of a transition, or the instantaneous jump from the last frame of the first clip to the first frame of the second. Studio provides a large collection of transitions, most are useful, others very pretty to look at but not the sort of thing you'd use in everyday life — they're just too flashy. Try them by all means, but reflect for a moment, when did you last see such a transition being used, whether in a Hollywood movie or a TV program on the box?

Video Effects

Studio has two classes of video effects: curative effects, which fix underlying problems with the video and artistic effects, which modify or enhance the footage. Curative filters include brightness and colour adjustments, while artistic enhancements include the ability to convert your video to black and white so it looks like an old film, or create slow-motion or fast-motion effects.

Auto Colour Correction

I've always considered Studio's Colour Correction a major plus feature and if Auto Colour Correction can't fix a poorly coloured video, the RTFX supplied White Balance feature works well.

Magic Bullet Looks

Studio 12 Ultimate includes Red Giant Software's Magic Bullet Looks (Fig. 7) a set of customizable preset looks that you can apply to your video to create a certain tone. Each look is a combination of multiple effects that you can customize and save as your own "look". Professional filmmakers use Magic Bullet Looks and similar tools, so that your digital video looks like film. Initially I was unfamiliar with many of Magic Bullet Looks' controls, but they're relatively easy to learn, and the results can be impressive.

proDad VitaScene

Although proDad VitaScene (Fig. 8), another included third-party product, was first introduced with last year's Studio 11. VitaScene has a splendid supply of fully key-frames special effects, including some fun film looks that can rival with Magic Bullet. More impressive are the glows, sparkles, and focus effects that Magic Bullet doesn't have. VitaScene also supplies a number of transition effects, including some spectacular text transitions with rays and sparkles.

Boris Graffiti

Boris Graffiti (Fig. 9) is a new third-party titling utility that comes with Studio 12 Ultimate. Unfortunately I found it very hard to use. You don't for example apply the titles to the title track as you do with Studio's built-in titling utility — you apply them as a special effect, which I found confusing.

Studio's Title Editor

Studio's Title Editor (Fig. 4) can quickly and easily produce attractive titles. For all video productions, DVD or otherwise, the Title Editor creates full-screen titles, positioned on the Video track, that introduce the movie or new sections, or show final credits. Plus you can create DVD menus and buttons, merging video editing and DVD authoring into one interface and simplifying DVD production immensely. The Title Editor also produces the menus needed to navigate through and around your DVD titles. The Title Editor can produce Overlay titles, positioned on the Title Overlay track, which display over your videos. These are useful for adding logos or descriptions to enhance the video.

Audio

Many viewers will tolerate grainy, postage-stamp-size video, but let the audio break once or twice, and satisfaction quickly wanes. That's why streaming technologies from Apple, Microsoft, and Real Networks all prioritise the delivery of audio over video.

Studio offers three audio tracks:

1. Original audio
2. Narration
3. Background music.

There is also a tool for ripping audio CD tracks and recording narration. However, Studio's audio feature set is special in two respects. First it comes with Scorefitter, which produces "themed" background music of any customisable length, there is also a collection of .wav files for special sound effects such as bells, animals, humans, music accompaniments and so forth.

If these sound effects are not to your liking, the program makes it very easy to grab audio files from an audio CD or any audio files on your hard drive. Also excellent is Studio's Volume tool, a real-time mixer that lets you customise audio volume on all tracks simultaneously. Together, these tools let you easily create and integrate professional-quality audio

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into your productions.

Creating Digital Files

When you click the Make Movie tab (Fig. 6), Studio has twelve options for creating digital files (Audio, AVI, DivX, Flash Video, iPod Compatible, MPEG-1, MPEG-2, MPEG-4, Real Media, Sony PSP Compatible, Windows Media and 3GP) for playback on your hard disk, burning to a DVD or CD-ROM, sending via e-mail or posting to a Web site. Choosing between these formats is simple; if outputting for disc-based playback on a domestic DVD player or CD-ROM distribution, choose MPEG, which with its excellent compression without losing detail, has largely supplanted AVI files as a distribution format. If posting your files to a Web site or sending via e-mail, use a lower quality and smaller file-size streaming format such as Flash Video .flv files.

DVD Authoring

The problem with video is that it can seemingly take forever to create a 30-minute video from your four hours of holiday tapes, and then you still can't quickly find that delightful bit where little Sally and cousin Johnny were holding hands, watching Punch and Judy.

The beauty of DVD is that once you've created a DVD menu it's pretty much infinitely linkable, allowing you to find the most important scenes quickly. And, though you can dress your videos up as much as you like, you can also choose to break them into scenes (or let scene detection do the work for you) and create a menu with links to the good parts. It's a dream: simple, fast, and better than VHS quality, with tape-like playback simplicity. Just open up the drive and pop the disc in. With DVD recordable drives and media prices dropping every time you buy your daily newspaper, it's also temptingly inexpensive.

Conclusions

Pinnacle Studio 12 Ultimate is an improvement over its predecessors and my first use of the program went well — which means that so far I'm impressed.

What I Like: Like its predecessors Studio 12 is a relatively easy to use video editing program with a host of features that work in most circumstances. It comes with a multilingual "Quick Install Guide" to get you up and running, and an excellent and profusely illustrated 320-page manual — a luxury bonus, when nowadays many program makers supply a very impractical online PDF file "manual."

As an experiment I timed how long it took

to edit my 6-minute long holiday video; it took precisely 29-minutes — an outstanding achievement!

What I don't like: Unless you're a dedicated professional or semi-professional videographer, you'll find some of the new third-party publisher features over the top with a long and sometimes frustrating learning curve, but persevere and you'll learn to manage the various features reasonably well. The absence of additional video and audio editing tracks is a drawback, especially as most of the current competitive video editing programs are well featured in this regard.

Pricing and Availability

Studio 12 Ultimate is available from the usual high-street suppliers or online. Amazon.co.uk have it listed at £77.48 inc VAT and free delivery. Pinnacle's online shop sells an upgrade from previous versions for £69.99 inc VAT. The less well featured Standard and Plus versions cost less.



Figure 7: Magic Bullet Looks menu screen



Figure 8: A professional-looking sparkly proDad VitaScene screen



Figure 9: Boris Graffiti screen shot



Figure 10: The Audio tracks options screen

News from Adobe

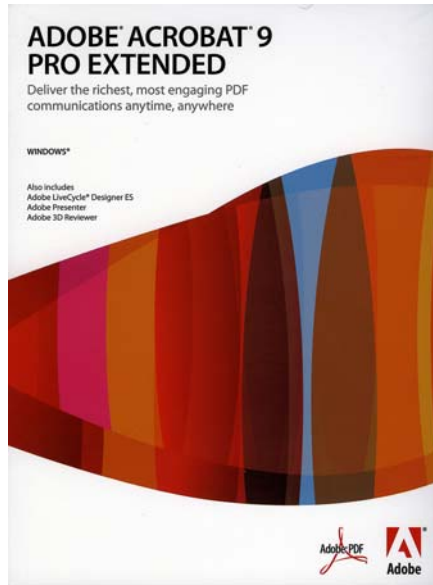
Adobe Acrobat 9 Software Now Available

New Version Receives Accolades for PDF Portfolios, Real-time Capabilities and Support for Adobe Flash Technology

London — June 25, 2008 — Adobe Systems Incorporated (Nasdaq:ADBE) today announced the immediate availability of Adobe Acrobat 9 software, a significant upgrade that transforms the process of creating and sharing electronic documents. Acrobat 9 delivers major innovations that can enable organisations and individuals to communicate in an engaging, professional manner. Now included are native support for Adobe Flash technology, the ability to unify a wide range of content in rich PDF Portfolios, and access to real-time capabilities for co-navigating a PDF document with colleagues.

For organisations worldwide, Acrobat 9 helps address today's critical challenge of communicating with widely dispersed teams of colleagues, partners and customers in a compelling way. Acrobat 9 is already garnering an enthusiastic response from long-term and first-time users in segments including financial services, government, legal, manufacturing, and publishing. They include: EDS; Allianz Deutschland AG; Italian Court of Cremona; Penguin Group; Dai Nippon Printing; and Kyowa Hakko.

Acrobat 9 provides deep support for Adobe Flash technology, enabling users to include Adobe Flash Player compatible video and application files in PDF documents. For example, a marketing manager can use Acrobat 9 to convert web pages with multimedia to PDF documents. The



PDF file can be shared for review and comment with others who are using free Adobe Reader 9 software, which is expected to launch up to twice as fast as earlier versions.

Acrobat 9 also includes the ability to unify a wide range of content into a single document with the new concept of PDF Portfolios. PDF Portfolios enable users to assemble multiple media types into one, compressed PDF file that can be customised with several professional layouts and specific branding. A sales professional could create a single proposal document for a prospective client that includes charts, spreadsheets and images, as well as a branded, introductory video from the CEO discussing the company's latest products.

In addition, Acrobat 9 provides access to capabilities for collaborating live within a PDF document, enabled by working with Acrobat.com, a suite of hosted services available as public beta at www.acrobat.com. This new capability can enable users to drive a group's navigation through a PDF document in real-time, helping ensure everyone is literally, and figuratively, on the same page.

The Acrobat 9 family consists of Acrobat 9 Standard, Acrobat 9 Pro, and the new Acrobat 9 Pro Extended software. The most comprehensive member of the family, Acrobat 9 Pro Extended, includes Adobe Presenter software for easily turning Microsoft PowerPoint presentations into multimedia experiences that can be published as PDF files.

Pricing and Availability

Acrobat 9 Pro Extended, Acrobat 9 Pro and Acrobat 9 Standard for Microsoft Windows, and Acrobat 9 Pro for Mac OS X, are immediately available in English, French, German, and Japanese language versions. Acrobat 9 Pro Extended is available for £619.00 ex. vat, and registered users of qualifying earlier versions of Acrobat1 can upgrade to Acrobat 9 Pro Extended for £205.00 ex vat. Acrobat 9 Pro is available for £425.00 ex vat, and registered users of qualifying earlier versions of Acrobat2 can upgrade to Acrobat 9 Pro for £145.00. Acrobat 9 Standard is available for £265 ex vat, and registered users of qualifying earlier versions of Acrobat3 can upgrade to Acrobat 9 Standard for £85 ex vat.

Price listed is the Adobe Store direct price. Additionally, the free Adobe Reader 9 is now available for download.

Review will appear in the next issue of ROM.

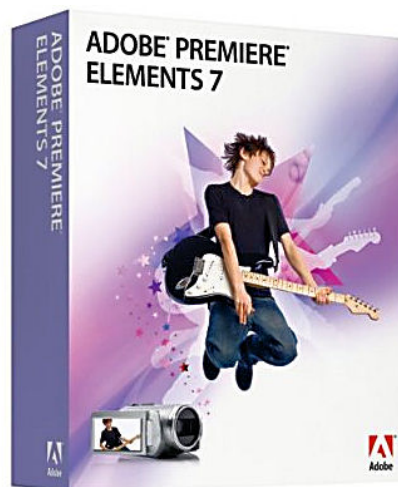
Adobe Launches Premiere Elements 7

Aug. 26, 2008 — New Version of Adobe Premiere Elements 7 transforms video clips into Hollywood-Style Movies in Minutes.

Available for Windows, version 7 features easy to use movie making options so users can create compelling stories in minutes, while also offering opportunities to grow and stretch their editing abilities.

Available separately or together in a single retail package, Adobe Photoshop Elements & Adobe Premiere Elements bundle give photo and video enthusiasts everything they need for the complete digital imaging experience.

"With the explosion of video on social networking and sharing sites, it should be quick, easy and effortless to transform raw video into polished movies worth showing off via YouTube or your own Web site," said Doug Mack, vice president and general manager of Consumer and Hosted Solu-



tions at Adobe. "Premiere Elements 7 gives users Hollywood techniques to do just that, with virtually no effort required."

Transform Video Clips into Hollywood-Style Movies in Minutes

Adobe Premiere Elements 7 allows users to produce their own blockbuster with no experience required. The software intelligently analyses each movie clip (including those in the newly-supported AVCHD format) for quality, number of faces, sound and more. It then applies Smart Tags so users can quickly find the best clips in seconds. InstantMovie creates professional-looking movies with a simple drag and drop of a theme onto a series of video clips. It adds a package of music, titles and transitions based on a theme such as birthday, wedding or extreme sports.

With new Videomerge, users can exercise their imagination by creating videos that make it appear as if they're performing on stage at a concert, standing in front of a popular tourist attraction or walking on the moon. Videomerge allows users to easily create a "green screen" effect and automatically place themselves within the scene, without requiring any prior video editing skills or knowledge.

Users can display their finished movies on

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high-quality DVD or high-definition Blu-ray Disc, on any screen from a mobile phone to an HD flat screen TV, or upload directly to YouTube from within Premiere Elements.

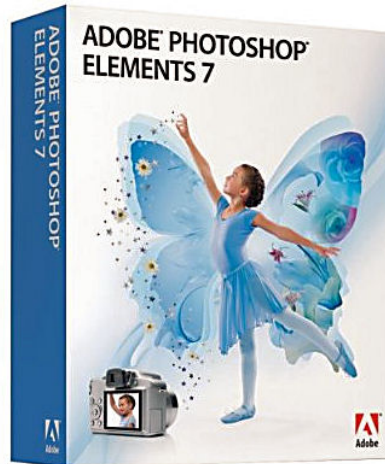
Pricing and Availability

Adobe Premiere Elements 7 for Windows will be available from 13th October 2008 for £76 inc VAT. Consumers can pre-order at www.adobe.com and www.amazon.com. Premiere Elements 7 and Photoshop Elements 7 are also available as a two product bundle for £111 inc VAT.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 7

New Version of Best-Selling Consumer Photo-Editing Software Combines Ease-of-Use with Editing Power of Photoshop

London — Aug. 26, 2008. Adobe Systems Incorporated announced Adobe Photoshop Elements 7 software, a milestone release of the No.1 selling consumer photo-editing software. Available for Windows, Photoshop Elements 7 makes it quick and easy to organise, edit, create and share amazing photos with others by leveraging



the editing power of Photoshop software, the professional standard for image editing.

Create Picture-Perfect Photos with Powerful yet Intuitive Editing Tricks. Photoshop Elements makes it easy to tell amazing stories through memorable photos. The new Scene Cleaner, based on Adobe's innovative Photomerge technology, creates the ideal photo by letting users simply brush away unwanted subjects, such as

tourists in a vacation shot who may be impacting the main subject of the photo. The new Smart Brush helps users apply incredible effects to a specific area of a photo with a single stroke, making it a snap to improve lighting and add rich textures with access to more than fifty sophisticated effects. Common editing tasks, such as whitening teeth or brightening blue skies, are a breeze to fix with the one-step Quick Fix tools. Surfaces can be softened while retaining edges and details crisp with a new filter ideal for portrait shots. Also, a new selection of Online Albums, based on Adobe Flash technology, offers users a richer interactive experience.

Pricing and Availability

Adobe Photoshop Elements 7 for Windows will be available in October 2008 for £76 inc VAT. Consumers can pre-order at www.adobe.com and www.amazon.com. Photoshop Elements 7 and Premiere Elements 7 are also available as a two product bundle for £111 inc VAT.

Norton Internet Security 2009 and Norton AntiVirus 2009

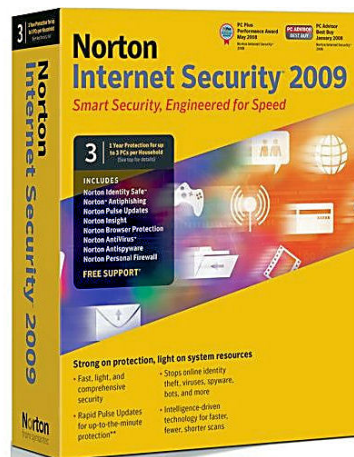
Norton 2009 Products Are Light on System Resources, Strong on Protection

READING, UK. – July 15, 2008 – Symantec makers of Norton security software, today announced the availability of public betas of Norton Internet Security 2009 and Norton AntiVirus 2009, designed to set a new industry standard for speed and performance. The betas of the award-winning product line are available for download from <http://www.symantec.com/norton-beta/>.

The Norton 2009 products have been designed with a “zero-impact” performance goal, supported by more than 300 improvements that span nearly every aspect of the product, from the scanning engines to the user interface. The beta versions are on track to deliver on several key metrics including a one-minute installation, the industry's fastest protection updates and less than half the memory usage of the next leading competitor.

A key innovation supporting the zero-impact performance goal — and an industry first — is a new technology called Norton Insight that reduces the need to scan files in the first place. Leveraging data from millions of Norton Community members, Norton Insight allows the Norton security products to avoid scanning any files that are commonly found on most computers and statistically determined to be trusted.

Norton 2009 will have features designed for advanced computer users and gamers:

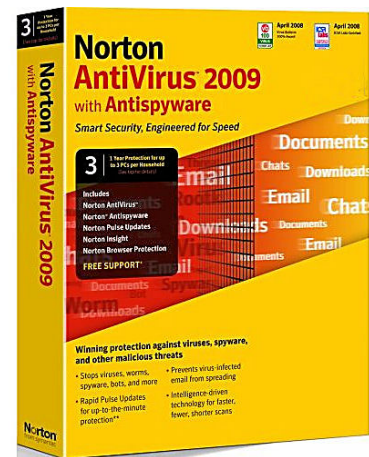


- Silent mode — suspends alerts and updates automatically to avoid interrupting or slowing activities such as games, movies or presentations.
- Simplified user interface — provides easier access to detailed configuration settings and the ability to track detection and performance status.

In addition to the performance features, Norton 2009 will deliver industry-leading security functionality:

- Norton Identity Safe — keeps your identity safer than ever when you buy, bank, browse and game online*
- Home Networking feature — allows users to easily view and manage devices on their home network*
- AntiBot features — prevents bots from taking control of your PC

*Features available in Norton Internet



Security 2009 only

Beta Availability

Norton Internet Security 2009 and Norton AntiVirus 2009 betas are available for free public download at: <http://www.symantec.com/norton-beta/>

PS. As full versions launch on 12th September, it's possible that the public betas will have been withdrawn by now.

Pricing and Availability

Norton Internet Security 2009 is available from Amazon.co.uk for £48. (Upgrade version £39) whilst Norton AntiVirus 2009 costs £29 also from Amazon. Prices include VAT and free delivery.

Reviews to follow. Also in the pipeline is a new and improved Systems Works 2009 due later this year.

MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 14

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

The last issue of ROM contained a comprehensive preview of what was to come with the launch of Magix Movie Edit Pro 14. Since then I've run a review copy though it's paces to see how well it copes with the video-editing competition, namely the latest version of Pinnacle's Studio (Studio 12), see review starting on page 4, and hopefully when it arrives for review, Adobe's Premiere Elements 7 (advance details on page 8).

In Use

Given that it's now up to version 14 I just wondered why I hadn't reviewed Movie Edit Pro in the past, but in July I finally got my hands on a copy.

The installation was a long and involved process, which I realised was probably down to the many included, but mostly useful editing plug-ins.

Initial impressions were that the menu and editing screens were clear enough for a novice to get the hang of things quickly, but as you delve beneath the surface to do more advanced tasks using the plug-ins, the editing screen becomes unnecessarily cluttered. (Fig. 9)

The program comes with two 128-page manuals. The main manual and a supplement covering among other things the use of Fades, Effects, and Edits.

Following installation you are offered the choice of opening an existing project or starting a new one. The program offers three main working modes:

- Record,
- Edit
- Burn

All three of which are activated by Tabs running across the top of the screen (Fig. 1).

As with Pinnacle Studio the record mode allows you to import footage into the PC by simply hitting the Record button and then selecting from the menu as to what you want to import, perhaps a DV sequence from a Camcorder, an existing file on your computer whether video or audio, or copy from a non-copy protected DVD and arrange them into a storyboard sequence in the program's timeline window. (Fig. 2).

Once you've imported your clips its time to click on the Edit mode button when the screen view changes to offer a range editing tools such as transitions, special effects and other tools (Fig.s. 3-5).

Very much like Pinnacle's "SmartMovie" feature, Movie Edit Pro has MovieShow Maker which automatically creates a movie from your imported footage. For Novices or those new to editing MovieShow Maker
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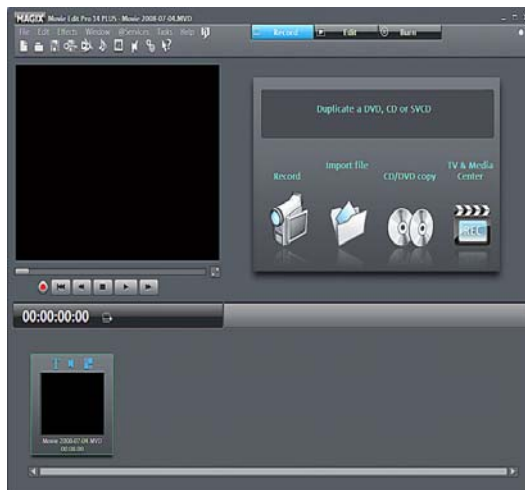


Figure 1

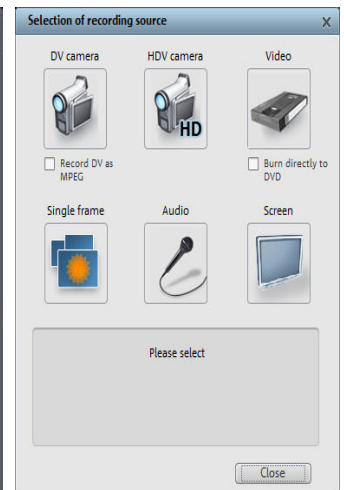


Figure 2

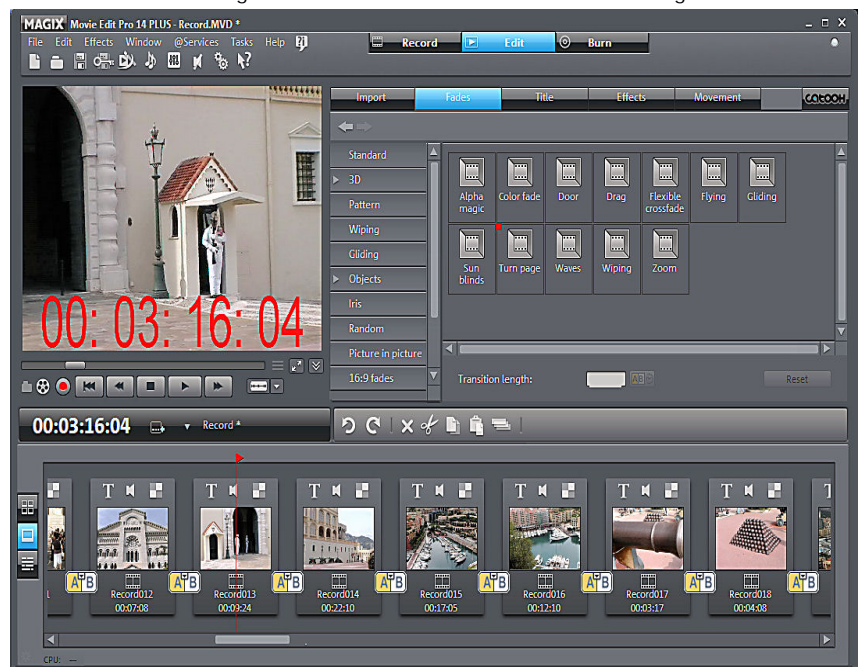


Figure 3. Editing Tools — Select Transitions



Figure 4. Editing Tools — Create Title

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works well. All that's necessary is to Record (Import) the footage you want to use and if you haven't already done it conduct scene recognition, delete unnecessary scenes, select a style for your movie e.g. if your video features a Christmas party check the "Christmas" style. Select the audio (background music) you want to use etc. Basically, it assembles the video clips you place in the Timeline and turns them into a finished project by automatically adding music, simple effects and transitions.

MovieShow Maker

To show how easy it is to create a movie using MovieShow Maker the full sequence as shown in Fig. 6 is:

- **Style:** MovieShow Maker automatically adds effects and transitions and additional styles of your choice to your movie, for instance, silent movie, Christmas video or movie clip (Fig. 7).
- **Use Style between Start and End Marker:** When this checkbox is activated, the style is only used between the start and end markers. If it is not activated, all the material from the slideshow is used.
- **Audio File (Background Music):** You can select either a song or additional sound recordings for use as background music.
- **Volume ratio:** This slider lets you adjust the mix levels between the music and the original sound from the movie file.
- **Movie Properties:** This slider is used to set the length of the show. Both the transition effects and the display time for the videos are increased or decreased depending on the length of the film. When the option "Adapt length to music" is activated, the film length will correspond exactly to the length of the selected audio file.
- **Use Custom Trailer:** Here you can enter your own individual text for the trailer. Use the Edit Trailer Text button to make changes to the text later.
- **Effect Frequency and Intensity:** The Effects slider controls the automatic effects — there are many!
- The "Advanced" button allows you to specify the elements to be used.
- **Apply Style (Preview):** In the preview monitor on the dialog box, you can see how each of the styles affects your MovieShow.
- **Advanced.** In this dialog you can specify which effects you want to use and which you don't. The higher the frequency and intensity, the more effects appear in the list.

When it comes to adding music to your video the Atmos synthetic music generator plug-in is invoked which offers further

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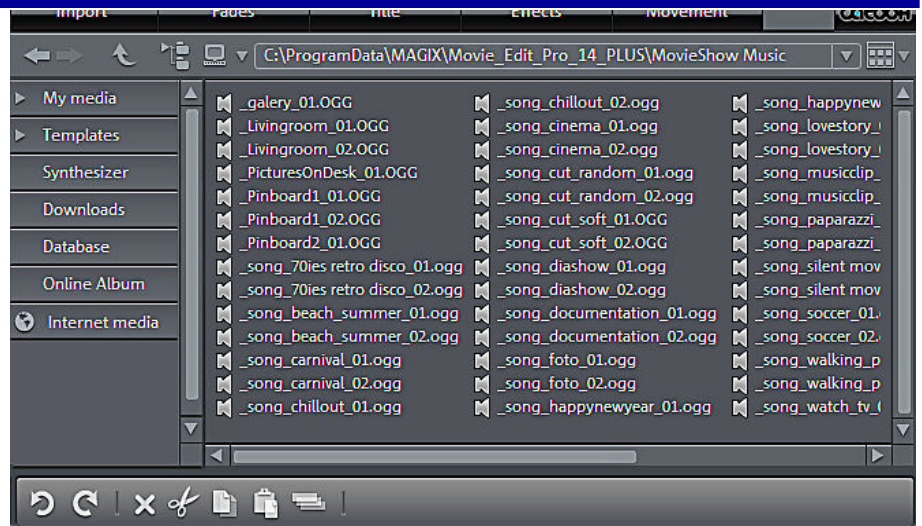


Figure 5: Editing Tools — Select Music

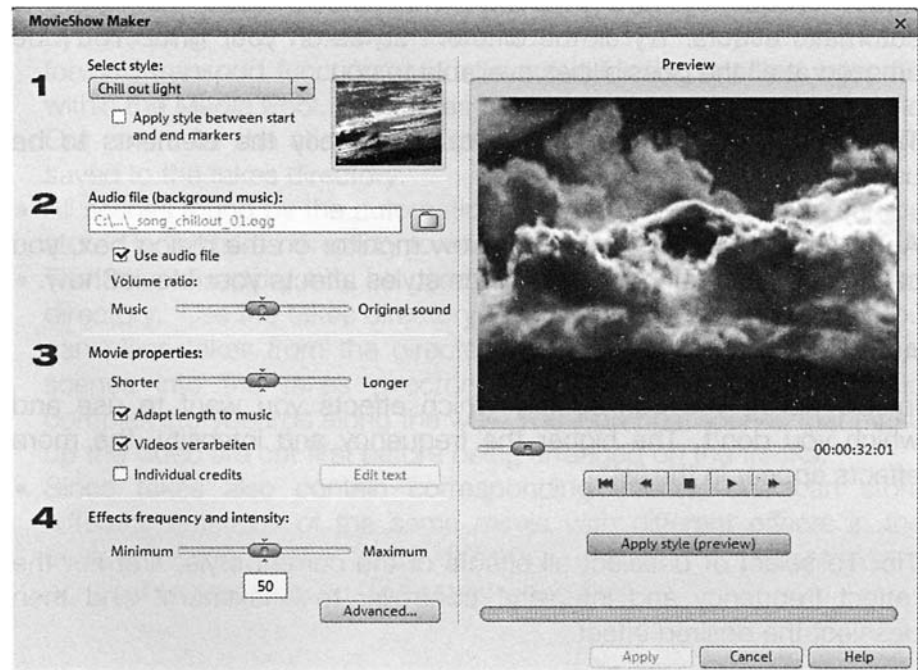


Figure 6: MovieShow Maker

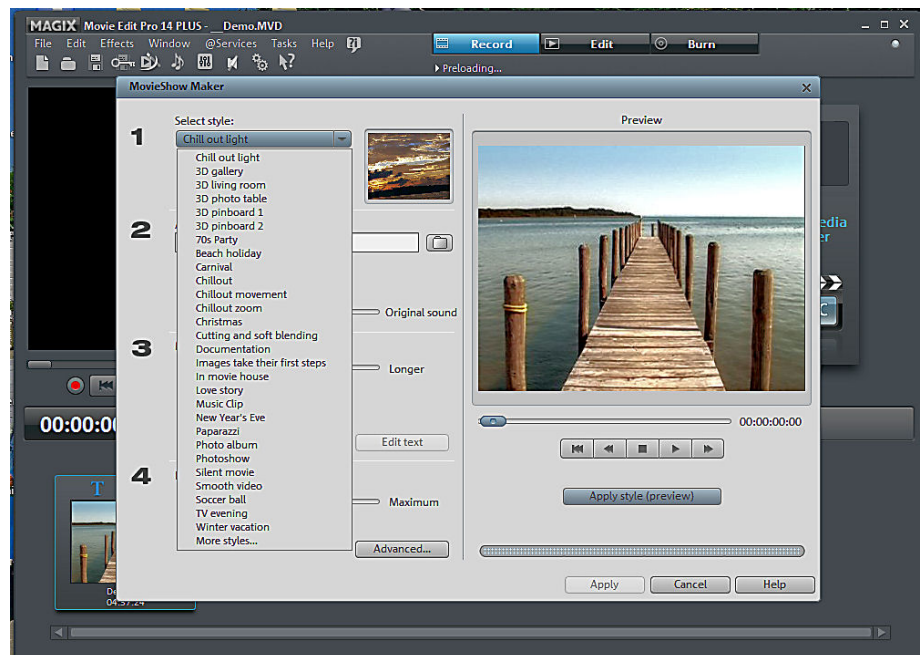


Figure 7: MovieShow Maker — Select the style from the list for your automatic video.

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audio possibilities (Fig. 8).

Burning Your Project

Having assembled, edited and possibly let MovieShow Maker automatically create your video the final step is to “Burn” your video. Movie Edit Pro has two options available for burning video projects. In ‘EasyBurn’ mode a standard DVD video can be burned quickly, whilst if one selects the more advanced ‘Burn Mode’, it’s possible to create presentations and slideshows of your video or still images. You can even “burn” your projects as .flv files and upload these videos direct to YouTube without having to leave the program — very nifty indeed should you be a regular YouTube contributor.

There is also MPEG4 support for exporting files onto handheld devices such as an iPod or Playstation Portable but to use this facility it’s necessary to activate the MPEG4 codec via an irritatingly long-winded activation process. Not only that but unfortunately it’s also a requirement that before you can use the MPEG2 codec (essential for burning standard DVDs) one has to go through this tiresome process again!

Conclusions

Movie Edit Pro 14 Plus offers lots of editing control — enough to compete with Pinnacle Studio and it’s cheaper too. It doesn’t have Studio’s slick and easy to use interface, but it’s cheaper and as a bonus, Movie Edit Pro 14 Plus is currently on offer bundled with a full version of CrazyTalk 4, the leading 3D photo morphing product (as demonstrated by Laurence Fenn to great acclaim not so long ago at one of our meetings).

Pricing and Availability

Magix Movie Edit Pro 14 is currently available bundled with CrazyTalk 4. Amazon.co.uk sell the two together for £49.99 inc. VAT and free delivery.



Figure 8: Synthetic Music Generator to add music to your clip or whole video.

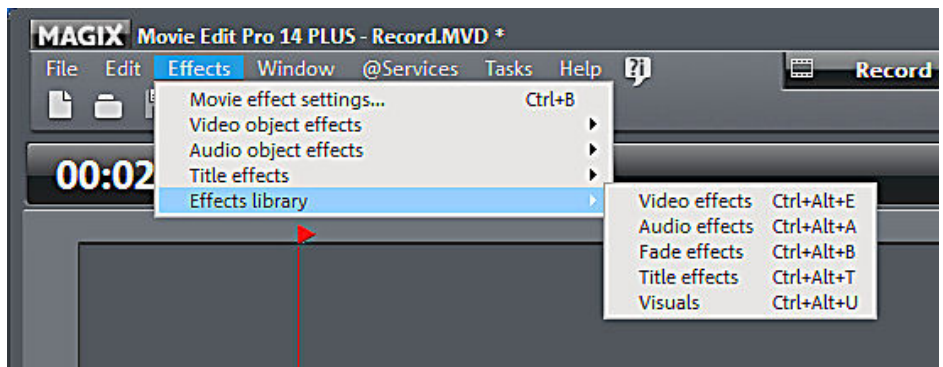


Figure 9: Drop-down menus. For example there are five choices when one clicks on the Effects tab which leads five more options, which in turn shows options for dozens of effects. But with practice it became relatively easy to use.

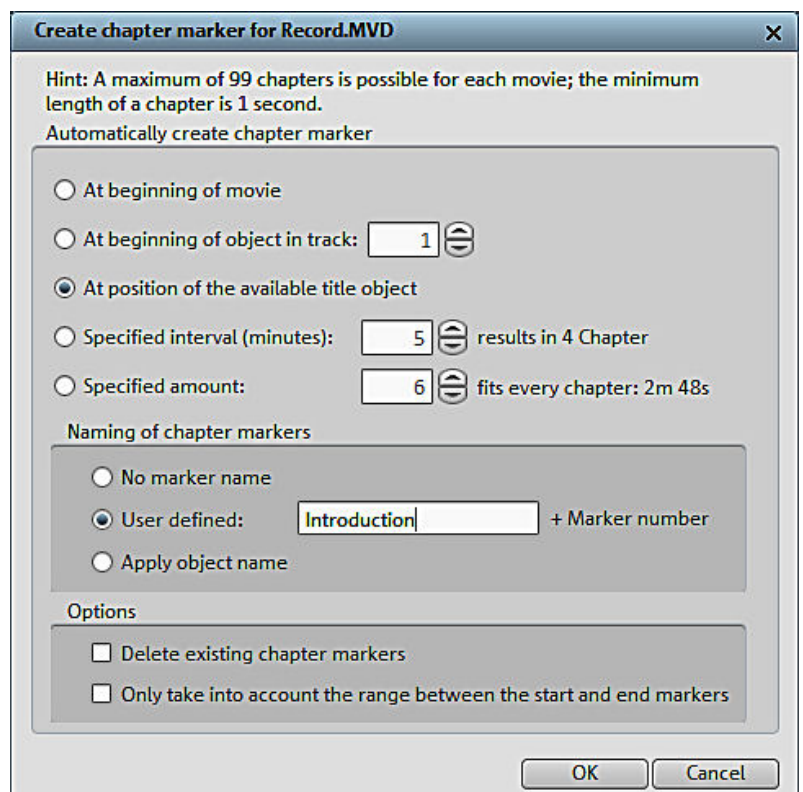


Figure 10 : Inserting Chapter Markers for quick access to your video DVD.