KICKING the TIRES

by Frank Petrie, MaMUGs, Technology Specialist

Product: Mac Pilot v1.1.2
Company: Koingo Software <www.koingosw.com>
Requirements: Price: (US)$9.95
Test Rig: iBook G4/933/640 MB RAM
Review Date: 30 December 2003

I love the adventures of "Wallace and Grommet" from Aardman Animation. The quality of stop animation has really progressed, all the way from King Kong through George Pal's Puppetoons and up to and including the Oscar winning works of Ray Harryhausen. Unfortunately, to accomplish this kind of work previously required lots of special equipment. But as with anything else involving media today, that has drastically changed.

"iStopMotion is the ideal supplement for your Digital Hub. Used by educators, professional and amateur film makers all over the world to create astonishing work, iStopMotion is the tool of choice for Stop Motion Animation (a/k/a Claymation) and Time Lapse Recording."

This should be fun.

The Good

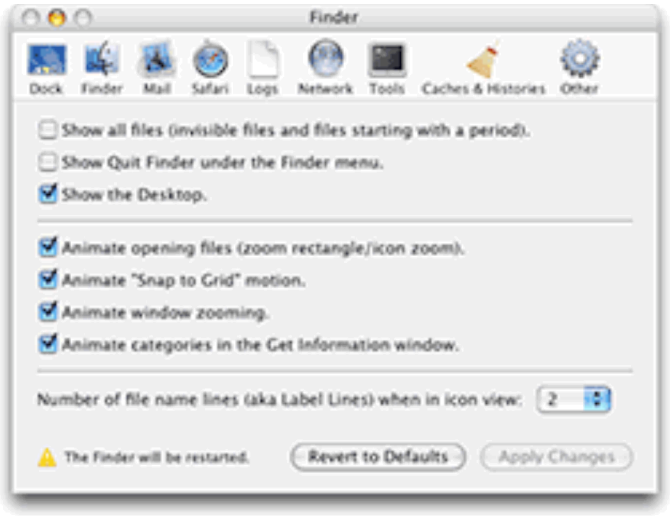
iStopMotion comes in a package installer. Double click, yadda, yadda, yadda. UI is intuitive but seeing as you're going to want to make some custom adjustments, it's probably a good idea to consult the online manual.

Being a busy modern day a-go-go guy, I chose the simplest thing that I could do and get a feel for the software - time lapse. Not bad - I can test software while sitting on my couch watching the Sixers blow a 20 point lead while eating lunch.

Life is good.

After about four hours of running I went back and watched iStopAnimation's handywork. Brilliant! I'm using my iSight but you can use any webcam or DV for input.

The preferences give you a wealth of choices without being daunting. Very good as your project will probably be challenging enough on its own. (You can even record your project in 16:9 letterbox. You gotta love it!) You can incorporate Live Video Overlay, Blinking and Onion Skinning. You can see Time Lapse by the second, hour or minute. You can even incorporate speech recognition. You can also use iStopMotion for video capture.



Currently, you can buy the DV version for the above price. But in Q1 2004, Boinx is promising the release of its Pro Version, which will include any target resolution and high resolution capturing devices for even higher quality output. Updates from the DV license to the Pro license will be available. There is also special licensing for schools.

Although the online manual is thorough, I would much rather have a .pdf file on my hard drive. This would be a particular bonus for dial up users. But according to Boinx, "Proper documentation is not included in version 1.0. It will be soon, however it is not yet ready for prime time." Well, that clears that up.

There's also a forum and a FAQ at their website if you need even more info or feedback.

The Bad

It exports your finished project as a movie, which I had no problem at all smoothly importing it into iMovie 4. And there's a ton of adjusting you can do to the movie or image you are about to export. The file iStopMotion creates is a Quicktime file. You can drag & drop it onto the QuickTime Player file and it will open. You can also use the "Get Info" command on the file created by iStopMotion in order to define that it should be opened with QuickTime Player henceforth.

The Ugly

I'm doing my second test as I write this review by aiming the iSight at me while typing. Apparently, I made the wrong resolutions for New Year!

The Close

I've never seen anything like this geared towards the consumer before. And its one of the few things that any of Apple's iApps haven't co-opted. If you want to see a range of examples, go to <http://www.istopmotion.com/about/customer_work>. It's astounding the things people imagine - at any age.

iStopMotion is a tool that you shouldn't overlook. it can open many new avenues of expression to you. Get it. Now. Enter a project in the Sundance Festival. Overnight startdom. All from your office. Sweet.

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