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## Media Cleaner Pro 3.0 speeds compression

By: Sean Wagstaff

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By **Sean Wagstaff**

Terran Interactive's Media Cleaner Pro 3.0 is a thorough upgrade to the \$360 (street price) multimedia batch-processing program. Key changes include still-image support and a dramatically improved interface, but by far the most important change is excellent support for QuickTime 3.0.

Apple's new multimedia format includes many compelling features for media producers, especially in the realm of Web and cross-platform delivery, and Terran has done an outstanding job of supporting these features in Media Cleaner Pro. (The \$30 Pro version of QuickTime is included free with Media Cleaner Pro.) Currently a Mac-only application, a Windows version of Media Cleaner Pro 3 is due in mid-November.

Media Cleaner Pro's primary function is to batch-process multimedia files for optimum delivery in a wide variety of environments. For example, the application lets you quickly convert a folder full of broadcast-quality DV files into a collection of thumbnail-size, highly compressed video files optimized for the Web.

Media Cleaner Pro 3 supports most of the file formats and codecs available in QuickTime 3, including animation, video and audio formats. Still images are also well-supported, and you can now convert a collection of stills in any of the many QuickTime-compatible formats into animation, video or other supported still-image formats. While Media Cleaner Pro offers good control over image sizes and color palettes, heavy users of still images will find that it does not provide the level of control offered by Equilibrium's DeBabelizer 3.0.

Media Cleaner Pro's revamped interface makes it much easier to set up batch processes and to assign custom settings to different batches. Previous versions



allowed you to set up multiple operations at once and let them run unattended, but Version 3 is more sophisticated and lets you get the job done with a lot less effort.

The program has two modes for processing files: A wizard steps you through configuring file compression based on the target audience and on preferences such as better audio fidelity or better compression. The Advanced mode offers very fine control over output by letting you set values such as maximum data rate and image bit depth.

Terran's Web site features a section called Codec Central, a compendium of available codecs and advice for using them, and the wizard's standard settings reflect the company's codec expertise. For example, the wizard did an excellent job of compressing video files for 28.8-Kbps modem connections after we answered a few short questions. Only rarely did we find it necessary to step into the advanced mode to fine-tune settings, but the advanced controls are impressive.

One important addition in Version 3 is a data-rate graph that shows the bandwidth of a movie on a frame-by-frame basis so you can pinpoint the source of data spikes and other potential trouble spots. We found that this graph, along with the Suppress Spikes preferences setting, helped us achieve a noticeably better balance of compression and image quality than is possible in other programs.

Adobe Premiere users, for example, will appreciate the time-saving export module that allows them to compress movies directly through Media Cleaner, without having to first save them as QuickTime movies from within Premiere.

Although Media Cleaner Pro is an outstanding tool for compressing content, it provides only a bare minimum of built-in tools for significantly altering content, including blur, sharpen and noise reduction filters. We'd like to see Terran add support for Photoshop and After Effects plug-ins, which would greatly speed the addition of effects such as film grain and other postproduction details.

One of QuickTime 3's key features for Web designers is that it can automatically create alternate movies to support multiple connection bandwidths. This lets the QuickTime plug-in on Web surfers' machines download the optimum-data-rate movie for their connection automatically. Users can quickly set up Media Cleaner to generate multiple versions of media files, such as still images, for manual placement on Web sites.

Media Cleaner Pro is the only program that works with the \$499 Sorenson Video Codec Developer Edition to compress movies using its multiple-pass, variable bit rate encoding. Although Sorenson compression is painfully slow, we found that using this codec resulted in the best Web compression of video. It's well worth the additional cost and time.

Media Cleaner Pro supports audio compression through QDesign's \$399 Music Codec Professional, which produces a very good balance of quality and compression. RealNetworks' RealVideo codec is also supported, and advanced settings provide excellent control over that format.

Media Cleaner Pro 3 is an essential application for any Macintosh user who works with QuickTime and multimedia files and file formats. It makes fast work out of most compression jobs and ensures consistent, compatible output that will put a shine on multimedia products.

Mac Hits: Streamlined interface; support for QuickTime 3.0; works with still images; supports multiple-pass, variable bit rate encoding in Sorenson Video Codec Developer Edition; works with QDesign Music Codec Professional. Misses: Limited built-in effects; no support for plug-in filters. \$360 street price\* Terran Interactive Inc. of Los Gatos, Calif., is at (408) 356-7373 or (800) 577-3443; www.terran.com. \*Upgrades, \$129. Bundle of Media Cleaner Pro 3, Sorenson Video Codec Developer Edition and QDesign Music Codec Professional, \$1,100 (street price). **Sean Wagstaff**, author of Peachpit Press' "Animation On the Web," is at www.bendzine.com. Squeeze-wiz. The Settings wizard helps you choose compression and feature settings for different types of media delivery. Graphic movie. Media Cleaner Pro 3's data-rate graph shows data spikes and dips on a frame-by-frame basis.

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