

Rip Clips From Your DVDs

BY DOUGLAS DIXON

DVDS are not just for playback anymore. DVD discs are not only a convenient way to play and share your videos, but now you also can use them as your video archives—you can extract clips from your DVDs to re-use in new presentations. New DVD software applications allow you to directly combine portions of several discs into a new DVD or extract segments as video files to edit into new productions.

So, let's look at a couple of new alternatives for re-using content from DVDs, now including direct extraction to formats for portable players, including the Apple iPod and Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP):

- **Miraizon Cinematize 2**, a DVD movie clip extractor for Mac and PC that cleanly copies the original MPEG-2 video from DVDs.

- **InterVideo DVD Copy 4**, a disc copy tool for merging and copying DVDs, and also extracting content.

As discussed in the sidebar, there are more and more options for this kind of re-using of DVD content, also available in DVD-burning suites, video-editing tools, and DVD-authoring tools. And, just to be clear, we're talking about working with unprotected DVDs here, discs like those you have created, and not commercial Hollywood DVDs with copy protection.

MIRAIZON CINEMATIZE: DVD EXTRACTION TOOL

DVDs were designed as a delivery format, with the video and audio aggressively compressed after the final editing, and then intermixed together into a collection of big VOB files. As a result, while the content of a DVD is nicely optimized for real-time playback from a spinning disc, it's not at all convenient for editing. However, today's faster computers and better software make it feasible to work with the compressed MPEG-2 video format used on DVDs, so it's now reasonable to grab video out of a DVD as just another clip to use for a new editing project.

Some video-editing tools allow you to extract video for editing, and some DVD copy tools allow you to extract files in various formats (see sidebar), but these approaches can require extra steps or recompressing to other formats.



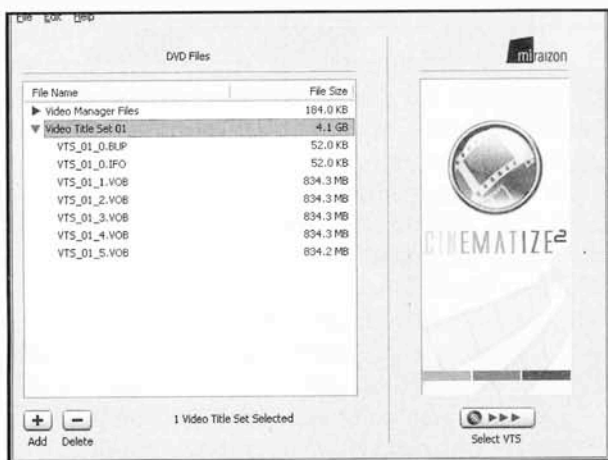
Cleanly copy original MPEG-2 video from DVDs in Miraizon Cinematize 2 by using the program's Segment tab to select the starting and ending points of the video clip you want to extract. Step through the remaining tabs to enhance your video, cleanup audio, include subtitles and choose output options.

A more straightforward approach is to use a dedicated DVD extraction tool like Miraizon Cinematize, available for both the Mac and PC (\$59.95 download). Cinematize is focused on getting the content out of the disc—extracting the MPEG-2 video and audio data into files on your computer's hard drive, ready for you to re-use. Cinematize delivers the original MPEG-2 video without any processing or re-compression, and also extracts the original audio, or optionally converts it from surround-sound/Dolby Digital AC3 format to stereo WAV or AIFF format that can be edited by most applications.

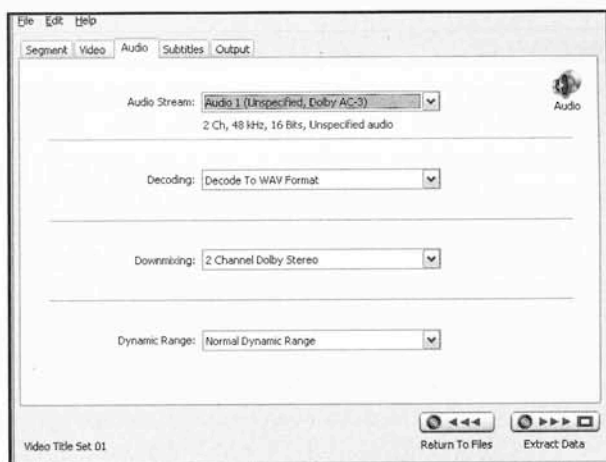
Cinematize is designed as a 3-step process:

- 1.) Use the first Files screen to select the disc contents to extract from—it's easiest to just drag and drop the main DVD folder (VIDEO_TS). Cinematize can work directly from a DVD disc or from a DVD volume with the DVD files stored on hard disk. Cinematize then displays the DVD contents as stored on the disc, with one or more Video Title Set (VTS) elements containing IFO information data files and multiple VOB video object files.

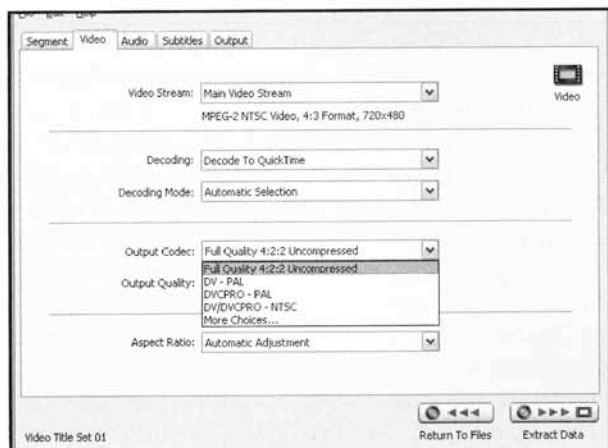
Highlight the VTS you want to extract from (typically the only one for consumer discs), and click Select VTS. Cinematize then reads the DVD contents and displays the second screen, with tabs to specify the segment to extract and the output format. Select the disc title element to extract from (typically the first—there



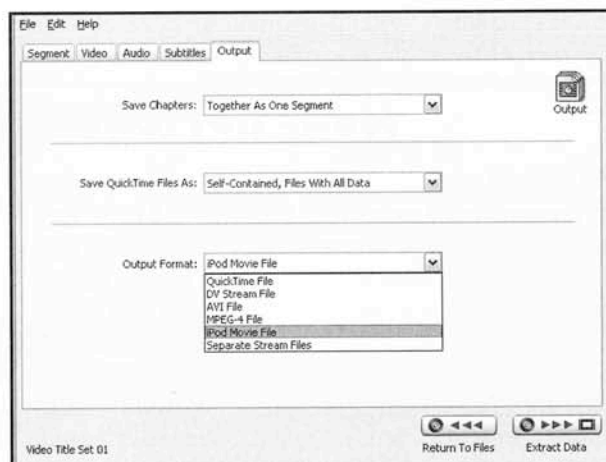
Select Video Title Set is the first step in Cinematize 2.



Cinematize 2 also offers a QuickTime output option.



On Cinematize 2's Video tab, you get a full list of video codecs for output quality.



The Cinematize 2 Output tab lets you choose QuickTime, AVI, MPEG-4 or iPod formats.

may also be titles with motion menus and other ancillary elements on the disc, and the tracks (video, audio, subtitles) within that title.

2.) Use the first Segment tab to select the starting and ending point for the clip you want to extract—as a chapter and time offset within the chapter. (You can scroll through the clip to make these selections, but it's easier to plan this ahead of time when you watch your DVD or run a DVD player application to preview the sequence.) Then, step through the other tabs to select the output formats. You can extract the raw MPEG-2 video data or output through QuickTime to other formats.

For audio, you can extract any available stream on the disc (i.e., stored as Dolby AC-3, MPEG-1 audio, or Linear PCM). Since surround-sound AC-3 format is not particularly easy to edit with today's consumer tools, you also can optionally downmix to two-channel stereo and convert to the more common WAV or AIFF format. You also can have the extracted segment saved in one file or to separate files for each chapter.

3.) When you are done selecting the segment and output format, click Extract Data to start the extraction to files on hard disk. That's all you need to do for

extracting the MPEG data from a DVD. You can get the original data, unprocessed and not recompressed, at the best available quality for further editing. Of course, depending on how much video you crammed on the DVD, the MPEG data may be pretty heavily compressed already. However, today's video-editing tools can work with MPEG data, just don't send the same clip through too many cycles of recompression as you re-use them.

Beyond MPEG, Cinematize also offers a QuickTime output option. You can then choose a QuickTime compression codec to convert to DV format or as uncompressed data, or other available QuickTime formats, with general control over the output quality and aspect ratio. And, you can save the result as a QuickTime Movie file or in Windows AVI format. The latest Cinematize versions, released in December 2005 (Cinematize 2.05 for Mac and 2.02 for Windows), also added support for extracting through QuickTime to MPEG-4 formats for downloading to the Apple video iPod and Sony PlayStation Portable. Just be careful to check the Help file to make sure all the necessary options are set correctly.

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