



By Loren S. Miller

COOL TOOLS

DVD extraction with Cinematize Pro 2, Video cleanup with Topaz Enhance

Cinematize Pro 2

DVD Extraction Utility for Macintosh and Windows
www.miraizon.com
\$129.95, regular version \$59.95 MSRP

I cannot tell you how many clients bring in a DVD as the only source, desperately needed for an important presentation, and I always caution them that quality will not be up to their first-generation material. But Cinematize Pro often makes me a liar.

I enjoy Cinematize Pro over freebie rippers for its orderly approach to extracting chapters from unprotected DVD discs. It's as easy as loading a DVD and dragging the disc icon into the CP window. CP sorts out all the video assets into title sets. You simply select one and painlessly open it into the content selection pane.

Cinematize Pro allows you to span and join DVD chapters into a single QuickTime movie, any format supported, including HD. A continuous extract can range from the first frame of Chapter 1 to the last frame of Chapter XX, or defined regions of several segments. The onscreen preview window lets you drag to fine-tune your entrances and exits. One by one, you add to a list of segments to extract, then tell it to do so, and go to lunch. No surprises.

If I had one enhancement wish it would be a custom output settings list I could set up and then choose from for multiple exports in a single session.. as in Episode Pro or After Effects. This becomes critical with so many new video venues opening up. But CP does a nice job of covering iPods and 3GPP player presets in popup menu choices, so this is a quibble.

Extraction is fast on new multicore towers. I could see almost every core engaged in my Mac Activity Monitor. Even non-64-bit apps like CP are multi-processor aware and really cut down on wait time. CP has little reason to access or load more than 4GB of RAM, the 32-bit limit, so it's not a huge issue.

The latest Cinematize Pro 2 includes extraction of menu screen graphics, ability to extract subtitles on separate QuickTime layers, even select discrete audio tracks—just a taste of a large list of thoughtful features worth discovering. Those not requiring such pro features can get a less expensive version called simply Cinematize 2.

CP has been on my "short shelf" of must-have utilities for years now, and continues to gain power.

Topaz Enhance

Suite of plug-in filters for Final Cut Pro 6 or later, After Effects CS4, and Premiere Pro CS4 on Intel Windows or Macintosh
www.topazlabs.com
\$349.00 MSRP

In a nutshell, Enhance was built to revive old films on video and upscale good standard

definition video to near-HD quality. It's not out of the scope of this product to deliver from well-lit and shot NTSC-DV material a very adequate 720P HD video image. And as we see here, it's great in reviving old film-to-video transfers from which you just wish you could wipe away grain and analog artifacts.

That's a mouthful, and with it comes a bucket of time. Even on fast multicore machines, Topaz wants to take its time chewing on noisy, grainy motion images, but the reason is because certain Enhance filters can sample neighboring frames for additional data to reconstitute into each frame. I call that cool. This is what computers like to do! The range of filters in the suite includes DeInterlace, DeNoise & Enhance, Clean (RGB) and Clean (YC), and several others for tackling compression "blockies" and other image issues. It's affordable, but no toy.

The test clip original was a 2-minute opening sequence to a prizewinning film I cut 30 years ago, THE POWER TO CHANGE, produced by the ubiquitous Jamil Simon, whose Third Eye Films in Cambridge was the starting point for my professional career. Jamil now runs Spectrum Media, LLC, still producing global-scope films revealing social programs to help repair the world.

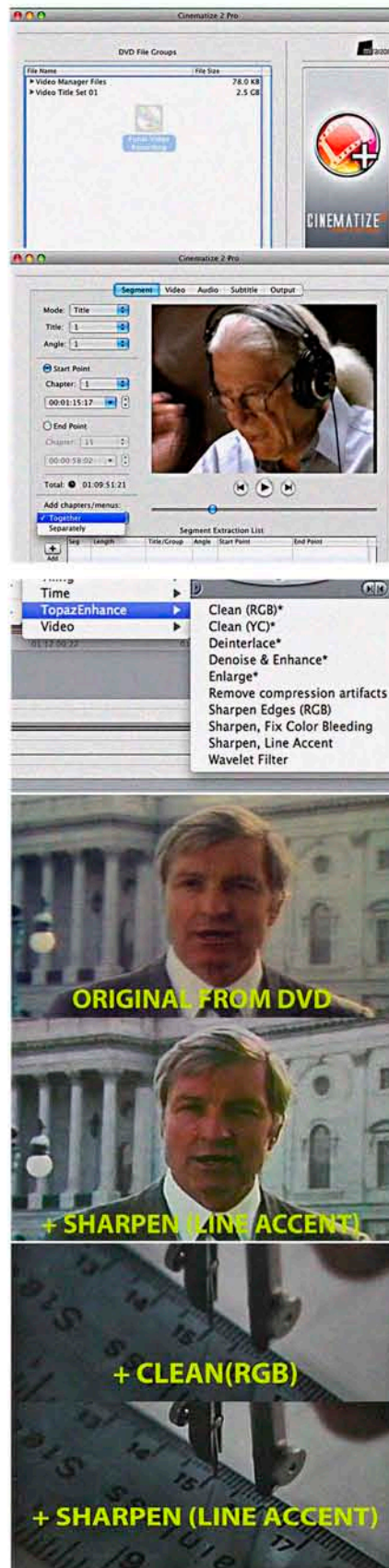
THE POWER TO CHANGE, narrated by Joanne Woodward, told us about energy-saving appropriate technology. First released on 16mm film, eventually transferred to video, captured to digital, it was finally burned to DVD. Whew! That's a lot of image pounding, colorspace shifting, and artifacture (a word I just invented) and it showed.

I extracted the DVD to DV-NTSC using Cinematize Pro 2, discussed above, at highest quality. I then loaded it into Final Cut Pro and first deinterlaced it, because the most powerful of the Enhance filters requires the clip be deinterlaced of its video fields and made into a progressive clip at exactly the same frame rate.

This is all explained in the easy-to-read Topaz Labs user guide, which lacked only a few details on using Enhance specifically in FCP, some of which is covered in their website tutorials. There's also a growing online community there.

Once I deinterlaced, I applied the DeNoise & Enhance filter. While the test clip was 2 minutes long, it required close to two hours to render on an older, 2.16 Ghz Intel Core Duo MacBook Pro laptop. The results using out-of-the-box filter settings were pretty good. There was far less noise and some enhancement to detail after first pass.

I exported the enhanced clip in its native settings and reimported it into a new sequence and applied another filter, Clean(RGB). This is a recommended workflow since you want to treat clips with multi-frame filters one at a time. This pass took 2 hours as well. But now the results



from top to bottom

Cinematize Pro 2 offers easy drag-and-drop parsing of DVD files for extraction to any QuickTime format.

Select In and Out points with ease in Cinematize Pro 2: add segments to extract as a single group or separate clips.

Topaz Labs' Enhance filter suite installs in Final Cut Pro's Effects menu. Those marked with an asterisk are multi-frame sampling filters.

The top shows typical 16mm grain. The bottom shows the results of three passes: a) DeNoise & Enhance, b) Clean(RGB), and c) Sharpen, with Line Accent, which doesn't work well on faces. Other Sharpen filters are available.

Same three filter passes on this closeup: a) DeNoise & Enhance for basic grain removal; b) Clean(RGB) for finer restoration; finally c) Sharpen (Line Accent), which works well on objects with edges. Both examples are unaltered frame exports, only upsampled for print.

the image. Faces became mildly posterized. Objects with hard edges became nearly perfect. With careful filter selection, this show would be ready for FCP color correction, paint-out of film cement blemishes, minor dust and scratch removal; video touchup now supported in Photoshop Extended CS4.

For the budget conscious among us who can't afford a \$3000 Teranex box, but who did spend \$3000 on a new multi-core tower and wondered why, the \$350.00 Topaz Enhance suite is the first line of attack to revive a project like this. It might take only a couple normal workdays, perhaps a long weekend. Of course this can only improve as faster hardware appears.

Not a bad solution for a process which, done well, usually requires thousands of dollars in hardware or time in a costly vision engineering suite, or both.

looked like a thin film had been peeled off, practically no grain noise, only smooth surfaces.

Finally, I added Sharpen (Line Accent), one of three specialized Sharpen filters offered, which only took 30 minutes on the laptop. The results were mixed, depending upon

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