

## Looking at Spectator—the QuickTime Editor

By Brian C. Keith

Want to show your user group a slick demo of Word 5.0 icons? Or your co-workers in Peoria that fantastic FrameMaker quick tip you just discovered? Or your lamo boss how to use Excel to do his own expense reports? And you don't have big bucks to buy Premiere or VideoShop and a lot of video equipment?

Then get Spectator.

Spectator 1.0, from Baseline Publishing, is a QuickTime-based utility that allows you to capture—in color—the actions you perform on your Macintosh and then edit and add audio to your captured footage.

Spectator consists of an application program and an extension. The application program runs under System 7 (system 6.0.7 or later). You also get the QuickTime extension, version 1.0, and some files for using Spectator with QuickTime on System 6.0.7.

Using Spectator is simple. After launching it, you select the area of the screen you want to record by clicking on a black capture frame. You can enlarge and reduce the size of the black capture frame and drag it to any location on your screen. (See Figure 1.)

To start capturing, you press a couple of user-defined “trigger” keys. To pause capturing, you press another set of trigger keys. When you pause capturing, you can either switch back to Spectator and save your captured footage in a Spectator movie file, or rearrange things in the black capture frame and resume capturing—a handy feature if you want to record only the important stuff for your demo or presentation.

Spectator provides six methods to compress captured footage: Apple Animation, Apple Compact Video, Apple Graphics, Apple None, which converts color when necessary, but doesn't compress captured footage, Apple Photo - JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group), and Apple Video. To specify the compression method you want to use, you simply select it in a dialog box.

You can either save your captured footage as a movie that requires Spectator to play, or as a self-playing movie that requires only QuickTime.

Adding a soundtrack to a Spectator movie is just as easy as capturing footage. To record your own custom soundtrack, you need either a Macintosh with a built-in microphone or a sound digitizer like a MacRecorder.

To add your own custom soundtrack, you open a saved Spectator movie, select the Track option on the menu bar, and drag down to Record Soundtrack. The Record Soundtrack dialog box, which looks like a simplified VCR panel, appears. (See Figure 2.) To start recording, you click on Record. Your movie begins to play automatically. As you speak into the microphone or digitizer, your words are recorded. To stop recording your soundtrack, click on Stop. To incorporate the soundtrack into your Spectator movie, save the movie again.

If you don't have a microphone or digitizer, you can import pre-recorded sounds, but only if they are

saved in either System 7 sound format (snd\_) or AIFF (Audio Interchange File Format). You can always use Spectator's simulated Macintosh sounds feature, that simulates a click when you click the mouse, a key click when you press a key, and a beep when a system beep occurs. Spectator incorporates these sounds into your movie at your request.

Baseline claims that you can add up to 16 soundtracks to a Spectator movie, but practically speaking, you're limited to three or four soundtracks on most Macs because of hardware limitations.

For those Macintosh users who like to learn how to use a program by trying it out rather than reading the manual, you *really* should take a look at the Spectator User's Guide. It is informative and clear.

Moreover, it is sprinkled heavily with humorous gems like these:

1. NOTE: Movies that are played with the "Play forward then reverse (ping-pong)" option probably shouldn't have soundtracks (or should have their sound volume set to zero), since QuickTime plays the audio in reverse as well as video. This "feature" appears to be useful only when deciphering satanic rock lyrics.
2. WARNING: Use the "Change the screen's color settings" option sparingly. Users should almost always be in control of the color settings for their Macintosh screen. Changing this setting without asking the user is considered very tacky in many circles.

Spectator's list of warts is short, although in one case the wart is substantial enough to warrant concern.

First, a Stop trigger key that, when you click on it, stops capturing footage and displays the Save movie dialog box would be a welcome addition. There's a Stop button on the Record Soundtrack dialog box. Why isn't there a similar command for stopping the capturing of video footage?

A more serious problem, Spectator's biggest drawback, is its inability to record a soundtrack while capturing footage. I hope that Eric Shapiro, Spectator's author, adds this important feature to Spectator 2.0. If not, Baseline may find itself wanting customers. Vision Software, which markets CameraMan, a product with which Spectator competes, has already announced that CameraMan 2.0 will allow recording a soundtrack *while* capturing footage. CameraMan 2.0 is expected to ship in the Spring and will sell at the same list price as Spectator. What's more, CameraMan not only allows you to pan across your screen in Follow-the-Cursor mode, it also allows you to save your captured footage in PICS or PICT files. (You can save captured footage in Spectator as QuickTime movies only.)

Spectator's other big nuisance is its slow frame rate. Spectator allows you to specify the frame rate you want to use. You can even set Spectator to capture footage at the fastest frame rate that your particular Macintosh allows. (See Figure 3.) But even on a Macintosh IIfx set to 256 colors, Spectator's capture frame rate is dreadfully slow. The cursor frequently disappears for a second or two in many captured movies. Obvious gaps appear when folders open. Spectator's choppy "art" movies might look good on MTV, but they make irksome training, demo, and presentation movies.

The low frame rate may be an inherent problem in QuickTime or in the method used to compress captured footage rather than in Spectator itself. As QuickTime and compression methods get better, Spectator's frame rate problem may improve as well. For now, the jury is out on this one.

Is Spectator worth the bucks you pay for it? Right now, yes. How long Spectator remains "worth it" depends on when Spectator 2.0 is released and whether or not you can use it to capture footage and record a soundtrack simultaneously. You might want to wait until Spring before you buy. If Vision Software releases CameraMan 2.0 first, you might be better off buying it instead.

Spectator runs on any Macintosh that supports QuickTime. You must have QuickTime 1.0 or 1.5 for Spectator to work. You need at least 2 megabytes of RAM to use Spectator on system 6.0.7 and at least 4 megabytes to use Spectator on System 7. The suggested retail price of Spectator 1.0 is \$149. The street

price is about \$90.

The facts  
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