Snapz's Main Capture Window lets you choose the type of capture you want to make.

Video CD using my VLC Player, and instructed Snapz to start capturing the movie. Sure enough it captured not only the video, but the audio. All was saved.

There is a wide variety of settings you can tweak for your movie. Here are a few of them:

•Camera mode lets you choose between Fixed Camera-the area being recorded doesn't move; Follow Cursor- the area being captured centers around your moving cursor; Smooth Pan follows the cursor and at the same time smooths the motion on the screen.

•Framerate lets you choose between 1 and 30 frames per second. The higher the frame rate, the smoother the movie.

•Scale lets you increase or decrease the size of your movie (from 10-400%).

•Microphone Track lets you use your microphone to do voice overs while you record your movie. This is especially helpful if you are creating a tutorial on a new application or game.

•Color Change lets you change the movies color and color depth. I used this feature to

decrease the colors to thousands so that I could get a smoother movie (since I have limited CPU power).

If you would like to see examples of movies captured by Snapz, check out the web pages listed below. They show examples of games being captured during play, and windows being moved around. The desktop demo is impressive (I have included file sizes for those with slower modems):

iTunes Movie (13.44 mb)
Surfing Game (6.2 mb)
A Monkey (3.5 mb)
Full Screen iTunes Demo (2.3 mb)
Desktop Demo (6.4 mb)

The Movie Settings window lets you specify the size, color depth, frame rate, etc. of your captured movie.

The Skinny

Evaluation: Apple's screen capture is adequate if you only do the occasional screen-shots. But if you are like me, capturing tons of screen shots for reviews, you will soon discover you need more capabilities. Snapz fills that need. I did have a few quirks to work out (i.e. it was capturing video but no audio) but the movie capture worked like a charm after I made a few adjustments to the settings.

Requires: MacOS X 10.2 or later

Company: Ambrosia Software

Street Price: $29.00 without movie capture/ $69.00 with movie capture

Demo Available

X Chameleon Photoshop Plug-in
by Mark Wiard

Chameleon is a Photoshop plug-in that automates and simplifies the process of pasting one image into another. It will help adjust the image color tones so the two images match better and will smooth the selection edges of the pasted object. The plug-in also works in Photoshop Elements, Paint Shop Pro and Photoimpact.

There are actually two modes to Chameleon, the Standard and the Snapshot mode. Unlike most filters or plug-ins, there are no options or controls to change, just choose the plug-in and it goes to work. This makes it easy to use, but is also a pretty significant limitation.
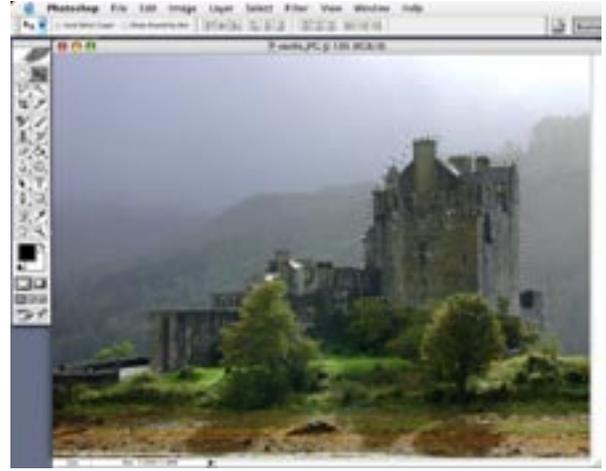
In the Standard mode, use one of Photoshop's selection tools (the Polygon Lasso is usually best) to outline an item, and copy this selection. Open your target image, and paste, use the move tool to position the pasted item where you want. Then apply the Chameleon Plug-in, like magic, the pasted item looks like it belongs there!

It does a pretty good job of figuring out what parts of the pasted image to clean up and what parts to leave. It also does a great job of smooth-

ing the edges, and getting rid of halos, the dead giveaway in most image merge operations.

This is the target image, ready to be spruced up with a castle.

This is the original Castle image, with a rough selection of the castle.

Apply the Chameleon plug-in and the castle matches with edges smoothed and the lighting tones matching.

Here is the original Castle image with some water pasted in, after applying the filter, it fits right in. Notice the green reflections on the water.

The snapshot mode is a little more obscure, it allows you to overlay one image over another. It will make the second image semi-transparent and do the same blending functions. I cannot think of too many real applications of this mode, beside maybe scary ghost or double exposure effects. Without some options to provide control over what gets transparent, and by how much it does not seem very useful.

The Skinny

Evaluation: This is a very nice one trick piece of software. But, I have to think that anyone who has spent the money on a major program like Photoshop will have the skill and motivation to learn simple masking and blending. Knowing these tools pretty much eliminates the need for this plug-in. Perhaps if you were doing production work (like a catalog), and needed to place product images onto a textured background, this might be a great help.

Requires: MacOS X 10.3 and a photo editor such as PhotoShop CS

Company: Akvis

Street Price: Personal Use is $69, and business use is $78

Demo Available