Importing Clips into iMovie

You'll want to open a new project in iMovie before you begin importing new footage into the computer. At the very moment you connect a DV device to the iMac computer, iMovie will detect the device and switch the Preview Window to Capture Mode. You can also do this manually by clicking the Capture Mode button located to the left of the Controller.

Is the Camera Connected?

FireWire sends more than merely footage to your computer—it sends a host of information regarding the status of your camcorder and its footage. Due to this exchange of information, your iMac can immediately sense when your camcorder has been connected or disconnected. Once you've plugged in the FireWire cable, iMovie can instantly tell when a videotape has been loaded or unloaded. Any time a change in your camcorder operations takes place, status messages will be updated in the center of the screen against a blue background. Make sure you don't unplug your DV device during the import process.

### Complete Control of Your Camcorder

FireWire's unique properties even allow the iMovie software to operate the main controls of your DV camcorder from inside the application. This feature is extremely convenient for moviemakers because it does not require you to push the tiny buttons on your compact camcorder when searching for footage. The on-screen buttons of the Controller will work as a remote control for the common operations of record, play, rewind, forward, and pause. This is ideal for searching, capturing, and displaying footage from your Mini-DV camcorder.

Selecting Footage for Import

With the Controller buttons, you can locate the exact footage you wish to import and begin capturing the scene by pressing the large Import button just above the Controller. Immediately, iMovie creates an icon in the Clip Shelf and the duration value counts the time of the footage as it is being transferred to

Camera Connected

Remote Control On-screen buttons provide remote control of record, play, rewind, forward, and pause features. The Import button begins the capture of new footage—you can even activate it while the video is playing at full motion.

CAPTURE MODE   VIEW MODE
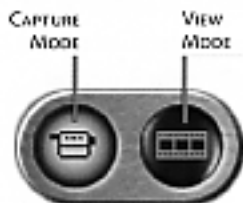
Set to Import When the Capture button is highlighted, iMovie is ready to import your video footage.

your computer's hard disk. The frames of the captured footage will appear in the Preview Window. When you have captured all of the footage you need, press the Import button again to stop the capture. You can also use the Stop or Pause button to end a capture session.

Batch Capturing by Timecode

To capture several clips at once, or the entire contents of your videotape, you'll need to set the iMovie preferences to automatically separate sequences by their unique timecode values. Once these preferences are changed, iMovie will transfer the high-quality video into the program, breaking footage into individual clips by the gaps between the date/time information that is embedded in the digital video signal. For example, if you recorded a few minutes of your son's soccer match and then later recorded his postgame reactions, iMovie will detect a disparity in the timecode and snip the scene into two clips. It's convenient.

Maximum Length for Captured Footage

The maximum length of a movie is limited only by the available disk space on your computer. There is no limit to the number of clips that can be combined to create a single movie. However, the maximum file size of an individual movie clip is 2 gigabytes. If you exceed this 2-gigabyte limit during an extended duration capture, iMovie will continue the capture as a second clip.
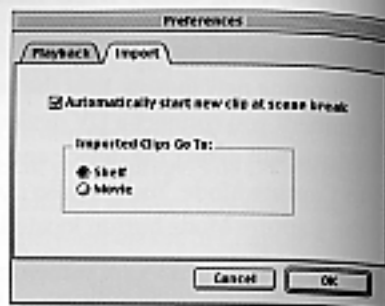
Preference Settings Changing the import preferences will allow you to batch capture and separate long stretches of footage by their timecode values. You can also determine whether imported clips are placed in the clip shelf or directly into the timeline.

No QuickTime Import?

Unfortunately, iMovie will not (easily) allow the import of DV footage from any source other than direct capture from a FireWire device. No other movie files, including Apple's own popular QuickTime format, are officially supported. However, there is a workaround. With the $30 QuickTime Pro authoring upgrade, you can export movie files in the DV Stream format and drop them into the Media folder of your iMovie projects. When you open the project, a dialog box will prompt you to trash the unexpected files. Simply respond by clicking the "Leave Them Alone" button, and the QuickTime files will appear in the Clip Shelf, ready for use.

Capturing Live Video from a Camera

In some cases, your digital camcorder may allow you to record images directly to the computer hard disk—even when there is no tape in the camera. This is handy when you are recording in close proximity to your iMac DV and wish to expedite the moviemaking process by capturing video "live." To capture live video from a camera, switch your camcorder to Camera mode and set the Lock/Standby switch to Standby. Remove any cassettes in the camera. (A tape in the camera will cause the camera to time out and go into sleep mode.) If the camera requires a tape to be in it but does not play video through to iMovie, check that the tape's write protection tab is unlocked. One other thing: Make sure the camera's demo mode is disabled. (Some cameras switch to a demo mode when left on standby without a tape inserted.) Check for a demo function in your camcorder's settings menu, and disable it.

When Space Runs Out

As you continue to import video footage, the free space indicator will estimate the amount of capture capacity left on local hard disks. When disk space runs out, or when no more empty spaces are available on the Clip Shelf, a dialog box will appear, prompting you to move some clips to the timeline. Do not attempt to capture video to projects saved on a remote server or to storage devices that reside over a network; the variable speeds of these networks cannot sustain the proper data rate for video capture.

Free Space A status bar on the iMovie interface indicates the amount of free hard disk space available for the capture of DV footage.

Renaming Clips

You can rename any of the clips imported into iMovie quickly by selecting the icon in the Clip Shelf. After the clip name is highlighted in blue, begin typing on your keyboard. The new name will appear at the bottom of clip (the name will be 10 to 26 letters long, depending largely upon the width of characters).

Deleting Clips

To remove a clip from the timeline or the Clip Shelf, simply highlight the clip and press the Delete key on your keyboard. You can also use the Clear command in the Edit menu. To restore deleted clips, choose the Undo command from the Edit menu (or use the Command-Z keyboard shortcut). If you empty the Trash in iMovie, you will not be able to undo any actions taken prior to emptying the Trash. Clips cannot be restored after the project has been saved.

CONVERTING ANALOG VIDEO TO DIGITAL

The Achilles' heel of DV has been its poor integration with analog devices. So a product such as Sony's $500 DVMC-DA1 Media Converter is a godsend. It converts incoming analog audio and video into a DV-compressed digital stream *and* exports digital signals to analog devices.

Better yet, it allows for input and output of both signals through its FireWire, Composite, or S-Video jacks. But the magic of the DVMC-DA1 is its ability to capture analog video streams and convert to DV format in real-time as it sends digital sounds and images to your iMac over FireWire. This clever box makes analog footage appear as higher-resolution data. Once this footage is converted into a digital video signal, it can be recorded to a Mini-DV tape, uploaded to a computer with a FireWire connection, or accessed by a digital camcorder.

Viewing Your Footage

You can preview your captured clips by setting the monitor to Preview Mode and double-clicking the icon in the Clip Shelf. You can also watch the clip in full-screen, although the image may appear slightly pixelated at this size. Despite the choppy playback displayed in the full screen mode, iMovie maintains your video footage in pristine quality and keeps audio in perfect sync.

View Mode Once you have finished capturing your DV footage, switch to the View mode to preview or edit clips.

HOW COME MY FOOTAGE LOOKS BLOCKY?

When the Macintosh imports DV footage, it keeps the original pristine source files on the hard disk and creates a series of preview frames to display in the iMovie application. These preview frames are created by removing much of the video and color information that NTSC televi-sions require and simply displaying the frames as they will best appear on your computer monitor. Don't worry, though. The screen images you see are only lower-resolution stand-ins for use in viewing your results in iMovie. These preview frames will display quicker at full screen and full-motion than the higher-resolution images.