



Full Stream Ahead

Philip Roy takes another look at streaming Quicktime online

To say that installing QuickTime Streaming Server (QTSS) is simple would be like stating that Apple makes moderately good computers. Installing the latest version of QTSS is a breeze!

For this article I decided to work with QTSS 4 Public Preview 2, effectively a second beta of version four of the software and not something Apple recommends using on a production server yet. If you need to get streaming soon, keep working with QTSS 3. However, the Public Preview features a number of changes that enhance both the functionality and ease of use of QTSS. These improvements include native MPEG-4 streaming, Mp3 audio streaming and an improved set-up process and web-based administration system. These last two features are nice new touches.

On stream

To install QTSS on Mac OS X Server, launch the install program and provide the administrator ID and pass-

word. Once installed and QTSS is launched, you'll be asked for the streaming administrator's user name and password. As the 'Read Me' states, it is set as 'streamingadmin' with an initial password of 'default'. After this you will be asked some questions relating to the setting up of the server. A lot of these items will need to be discussed with your network provider, be they ISP or the IT department at your place of work. These



Web-based administration of QTSS. The new look makes it easy to see the various network settings.

relate to port settings and other network issues. You'll also be asked to indicate the default folder where the movies will be stored. And that's it! QTSS is ready to stream.

The mechanics

If you recall last issue's article, I mentioned that the emphasis should be on video clips which look good and stream well. First, we need to understand just how QuickTime movies work. A QuickTime movie stores information based on the changes from one frame to the next. A five minute movie of someone sitting at a desk talking to camera will be substantially smaller in file size compared to a movie of the same length featuring rapid changes in scenery, fast cuts and lots of transitions. I can't emphasise enough how important this is to understand, as it makes you realise that there is a fine art to movie optimisation.

The optimisation of video tracks within a QuickTime movie is carried out through the use of 'codecs' (COmpression and DECompression). In relation to what we have just learnt about QuickTime, the codecs are the method or process of how a movie is optimised frame by frame, ready for delivery on the internet, CD-ROM etc. Each codec employs slightly different technology to do this and some are therefore more successful than others.

By paying for QuickTime Pro you get access to many codecs as a method of optimising your movies. Another way

you can optimise movies you have created is to export them from iMovie. Some of the codecs available are best suited for specific content (such as animation) and some are a little outdated. We all have our favourites, mine being the Sorenson codec, which produces superb results. One of the best ways to learn which codecs are the more effective and efficient is to download a movie and choose 'Show Movie Info' from the 'Windows' menu as the QuickTime player plays the movie. Be aware that users do not need to have the Pro version of QuickTime installed in order to be able to view movies compressed using these codecs.



Learn by being nosy! Viewing the information on movie files will tell you how people have optimised them.



Codecs galore. QuickTime allows you to compress your movies in a range of ways.

Prepare yourself

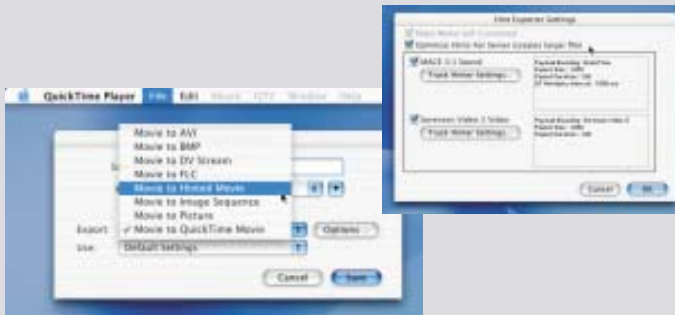
To prepare your movie clip, open the file and choose 'Export' from the 'File' menu in the QT player. For the settings, choose 'Movie to Hinted Movie' in the pop-up menu in the dialogue box that appeared. If you want to look more closely at the settings, click on 'Options'. Here you can specify the video and audio codecs, as well as choosing to 'Optimise Hints for Server'. Despite this creating larger files, it is still strongly recommended. You should also choose one of the more suitable codecs for streaming, such as Sorenson or H.263, with audio compression using MP3, Qdesign or QUALCOMM. If you are exporting a movie from iMovie, there are similar options to export a streamed movie file.

QuickTime – Why go 'Pro'?

For the preparation of movies that are discussed in this article, I worked with QuickTime Pro. This allows you to export your movies ready for streaming, by 'hinting' your movies. Hint tracks contained in movie files provide the server with information on how to stream the data across a network.

It is possible to import sequences from a DV camera and into iMovie and then export these as streamed movies, forgoing the need to purchase QuickTime Pro. However, if you are a movie trailer junkie like me, recent events on the Apple site mean you'll probably want to invest in the Pro version anyway.

Apple has begun making some of the hi-res movies viewable only to those who have QuickTime Pro installed. Still, it is worth it for the superb quality of the trailers and the Pro version does give you more choices in the formats you can export to.



Take a hint. QuickTime needs help to know you want to stream. Note the wide range of other formats you can export also

Get a Little Cleaner

As mentioned, the art of movie optimisation is a complex process. The whole process can be made that much easier with a product like Cleaner. Cleaner 5 (www.discreet.com) takes you through a series of questions to determine the best settings for your movie. At the same time, it can create multiple versions of your movie (for different speed modems) and different streaming formats (such as Real or Windows Media) all at the same time.

In a future article, we'll take a closer look at the many things that Cleaner can do.

And that's it. Just export your movie and then drag it into the folder you told QTSS the location of your streamed movies. You can then provide links on a web page to these movies and have the movies play in either the QuickTime player or via the QuickTime plug-in. If you want specific streams to be accessed only by specific groups, have a good read of the QTSS administration manual, as it includes details of how to password protect sub-folders of movies on the server. Have fun! 🐛

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Recommended QuickTime Reading

That Apple website goes out of its way to provide a lot of support to people intending to use QuickTime. Even the developer's section of the website (developer.apple.com/techpubs/quicktime) provides free access to a lot of detailed information. However, if like me you like a book on hand as a reference, I strongly recommend QuickTime for the Web by Steven Gulie (Apple Computers/Morgan Kaufmann Publishers), which came out in its second edition recently.

This is a superb book written for novice and advanced users alike and, better still, it includes a full licensed copy of QuickTime Pro on the CD. It's well worth the price just for that!!

Next issue... Working with Macromedia Flash – handy tips for a great program.