

PINNACLE STUDIO 12

Home movies made easy



Andy Shaw heads for the cutting room to look at the latest versions of Pinnacle's video-editing software

Home videos can sit on your PC for months waiting to be sorted out (assuming you even get as far as transferring it from your camera). The truth is that home-video footage can be painstaking to edit, especially if you're trying to make it look like anything other than a disparate series of wobbly, amateurish shots. Luckily, editing software such as Pinnacle's Studio 12 can help you make more of your video.

Features

★★★★☆

There are three versions of the software available. The basic version has everything you need to edit standard video, but upgrade to Plus if you've got an HD (High Definition) camera or to Ultimate if you think you'll need lots of extra effects. For most home-movie makers, however, especially those who find it hard to get motivated to edit, the basic version will suffice – anything more and you'll probably end up using too many effects, make your movies look tacky.

Performance

★★★★☆

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the software is how little it has changed over the years. The usual way to get video into the program is now to transfer it onto your computer from memory card or camera, rather than via the laborious FireWire captures we used to have to do from tape-based cameras. Yet one step of Pinnacle Studio's three-step workflow is devoted to video capture, while the process of finding video files on your hard disk can be tricky, which seems something of an imbalance. The interface features a small preview window that, although fast and efficient, is tiny compared to the preview windows offered by some rivals, even at full size.

Ease of use

★★★★☆

The workflow is very simple, dividing the remaining two steps between Edit and Make Movie. The Edit section is the star of the show. It has a wonderfully simple way of creating animated slideshows from photos, which is probably the best balance we've seen between simplicity and quality of finish. Completing the project to DVD or sharing on YouTube is also simple.



Value for money

★★★★☆

At £40 the basic version is terrific value. If you've already forked out for an HD camera then another £30 for the Plus version shouldn't hurt too much. £100 for the Ultimate edition seems a bit steep unless you're really going to spend most of your spare time editing movies, in which case the advanced features might come in handy. The downside to all the versions is that you don't get everything included straight away. We had to register and enter further product licence keys to get access to the right to use elements like DivX, H.264 and MPEG4 encoding. These were free but some, such as Dolby Surround Sound, come at an extra cost, and having to do this in the first place is confusing.

Verdict

★★★★☆

Its ease of use makes this a good choice for beginners to video editing, especially if you stick to the best-value basic option. There are some niggles – finding video files can be a pain, as is having to register the product online several times to get access to different file formats. However, once you've negotiated the stumbling blocks Studio 12 is solid and easy to use.

Pinnacle Studio 12

Studio: £39.99/Studio Plus: £69.99/
Studio Ultimate: £99.99

For Simple to use ■ Basic version has all essential features

Against A few hurdles to jump when you start using it ■ Small preview screen

What you need 1.8GHz processor ■ 1GB of memory ■ 2GB of hard disk space ■ Windows XP or better

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