

Smoothie and QuickTime

Smoothie works with QuickTime to provide powerful capabilities such as image compression and movie production. In order to use Smoothie's QuickTime related features, you must have QuickTime installed. If it is not present, these features will be grayed out and not be available for use. QuickTime is available from Apple Computer and a variety of other sources such as online services.

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Note: The following information is based on QuickTime release 1.0. Updates to QuickTime may change some of the details of certain dialogs and other aspects of QuickTime use.

QuickTime image compression

One of the lesser known features of QuickTime is that it provides a powerful and flexible way for you to compress still pictures. This can provide you with substantial memory savings over uncompressed pictures.

You access QuickTime's image compression via Smoothie's Settings dialog box (see the "Settings in Smoothie" chapter). You select an image compressor by clicking the Set Compressor button (located in the Miscellaneous area of the Settings dialog box) and using the standard QuickTime dialog box shown below.

You select the compressor you want by clicking on the compressor popup menu—this is the top

popup menu in the Compressor area of the dialog box. When you click on it you will see a popup like the one shown below.

his popup lists the image compressors installed on your machine– yours may show choices other than those shown in the above figure.

- Note: QuickTime image compressors use a variety of techniques to achieve their compression. Each technique is distinct and is optimized for different types of pictures. They each trade off compression/decompression speed, memory usage, and image quality in different combinations. You will find that the Graphics compressor and the Photo - JPEG compressor work well with smoothed images, but you should experiment with them all to see which ones work best for you.

The second popup menu in the compressor area lets you select the type of color your compressed picture will use. Different compressors allow different color selections.

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Note: The Quality slider control is used by certain compressors to let you select the image quality. Lower quality usually means more memory savings and vice versa. Some compressors, such as the Graphics compressor, do not let you adjust this slider as they only support one quality level.

The square area in the upper-right of the dialog box displays a sample of your output picture and how it will look with the currently selected compressor. If you don't have an output picture yet, this area will be blank.

The Graphics compressor

The Graphics compressor is optimized for 256-color dithered graphics. It can achieve very impressive size savings when applied to this type of image. Often, this compressor will compress your picture at a 10-to-1 ratio or better.

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If you use the Graphics compressor to compress a picture that uses Millions of Colors or Thousands of Colors, it will convert your picture to use just 256 colors.

The Photo - JPEG compressor

The Photo - JPEG compressor uses the Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG) algorithm for

image compression. This is a standardized technique primarily intended for use with natural images that do not contain sharp edges. Smoothie produces some images that can be successfully compressed using Photo-JPEG.

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Note: The Photo-JPEG compressor uses a technique that can degrade the quality of the original picture. The more it compresses a picture the more detail is lost. Make sure you adjust the Quality slider control for the best trade-off between size savings and image quality for your picture.

Using QuickTime compressed pictures

Pictures compressed with the QuickTime image compressors can be used as you would use uncompressed pictures. However, QuickTime must be installed on the system displaying the picture. If QuickTime is not installed, or if the image compressor you used is not present, the compressed picture will not be drawn. No crash will occur, but the picture will be drawn as if it doesn't contain any drawing information.

QuickTime movie production

Smoothie can produce QuickTime movies in two ways: a single-frame movie can be produced from a still image and a multiframe movie can be produced from a series of pictures using Smoothie's batch processing.

Single-frame movies

Single-frame movies can be created from any picture produced by Smoothie. These movies can be put to a variety of uses such as creating title frames, credits frames, or other still sequences. These single-frame movies can then be merged with other QuickTime clips to form a finished movie.

For example, you could take a video sequence and add a title to it by creating a title graphic in a drawing program. Process it in Smoothie (scaling the picture to the exact dimensions of the video sequence), then export it as a single-frame movie. Finally you combine your new title sequence with the video in a QuickTime editor (or you can simply use Simple Player's Cut and Paste operations).

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Note: Although your single-frame movie only consists of a single frame, its duration can vary. You set the duration by entering an appropriate value into the Frame Per Second area of the Compression Settings dialog box (shown in Figure 17 on page 26). For a 10-second duration you would enter 0.1 fps; for a half-second duration you would enter 2 fps.

Batch mode movies

Batch mode can be used to create multiframe movies. This lets you turn any group of pictures contained in a scrapbook file or any folder of PICT files into a multiframe QuickTime movie.

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Note: With Batch Mode, you can turn a slide presentation into a QuickTime movie by exporting the slides in your presentation to a scrapbook file. You can create a complex title or credits clip, or you can even create animations (if you have the patience to draw each frame!).

Configuring QuickTime movies

When you create a QuickTime movie, you need to tell QuickTime how you want the movie constructed. There are three basic things you control when creating a movie: the compressor, the quality, and the motion. When using Smoothie's batch mode you will see a dialog box like the one shown below.

ou select the compressor you want using the compressor popup menu. This is the top popup menu in the Compressor area of the dialog box. When you click on it you will see a popup like the own shown below.

The popup lists the compressors installed on your Macintosh computer. You may see compressors other than those shown in Figure 20 if you have a version of QuickTime that is different from version 1.0 or if you have installed additional compressors.

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Note: You will find that the Graphics compressor and the animation compressor work well with smoothed multiframe movies, but you should experiment with them all to see which ones works best for you. (You may also want to refer to the first Note under “QuickTime image compression” earlier in this chapter.)

The second popup menu in the compressor area lets you select the type of color your picture will use. Different compressors allow different color selections. (You may also want to refer to the second Note under “QuickTime image compression” at the beginning of this chapter.)

The Quality slider control is used by certain compressors to let you select the image quality. Lower quality usually means more memory savings and vice versa. Some compressors, such as the Graphics compressor, do not let you adjust this slider as they only support one quality level.

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Note: The square area in the upper-right of the dialog box is always blank when you are creating multiframe movies in Smoothie.

The Graphics compressor

The Graphics compressor is optimized for 256-color dithered graphics. It is excellent for producing high-quality 256-color dithered movies. If you use it with pictures that have Millions of Colors, it will convert the pictures to a movie that just uses 256 colors.

The Animation compressor

The Animation compressor works well with computer-generated images like those commonly produced with Smoothie. It supports a variety of color settings and quality settings. If the Graphics compressor is inappropriate for your movie (for example, you want something other than 256 colors), the Animation compressor is usually the one you will want to use.