

Kids with potty mouths sure are funny—until the parents find out your movie's to blame. If a general audience is screening your movie, spare innocent ears by doing some audio editing.



Overdub Flubs in iMovie

by Kris Fong



WHAT YOU NEED

- iMovie 3 (free, www.apple.com)
- Microphone, internal or external (optional)

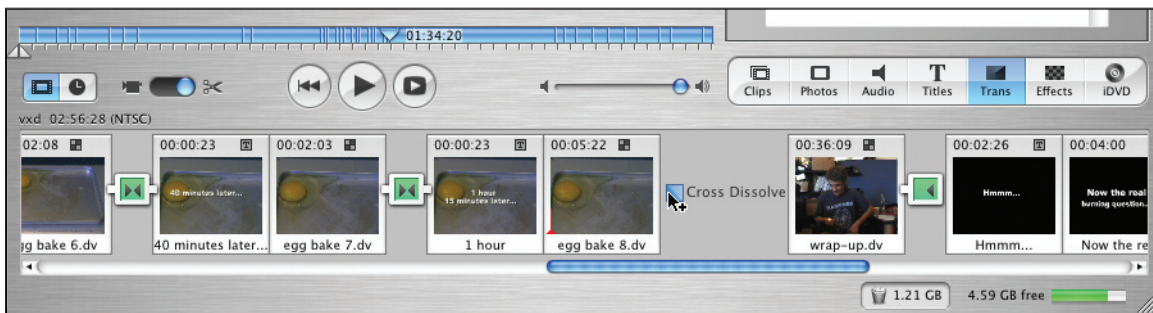
There's nothing like a beautiful summer wedding, and you—Mac-based moviemaking visionary that you are—aspire to capture every falling rose petal and every adoring gaze to create a romantic DVD for the happy couple. Suddenly, the bride lets loose an almighty string of obscenities when a bee lands on her bouquet. Woo-hoo—it's a wedding now! Sure, the scene would make great

rewind-button fodder for the groom, but rather than let the bride be emotionally scarred by her less-than-ladylike outburst, perhaps you should edit this blunder out of the final cut (and preserve an original copy for yourself in case you need blackmail material down the road).

You don't need to axe the footage altogether. Instead, you can drop out the sound at the moment of expletive delivery or even overdub the flub with milder words or a sound effect. Whether you want to silence foul language, swap out audio with a sound effect, or overdub lackluster dialogue delivery, here's how to perform these audio-editing feats in iMovie.

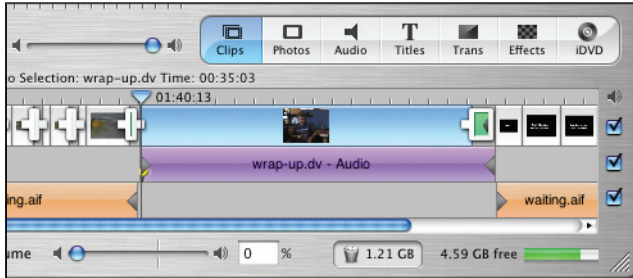
1 Edit Your Movie First Maybe you have a fast-cut, multiple-transition style of editing or maybe you prefer to just string clips together with few transitions. Either way, it's best to do your video editing before fiddling with the dialogue so you don't inadvertently unsync audio tracks

from video. Import your DV footage into iMovie, and then edit and sequence your clips together as you normally would in either clip viewer or timeline viewer mode. When you're finished, click the clock icon below the monitor screen to display your edited clips in the timeline viewer (if you weren't working in this mode already).



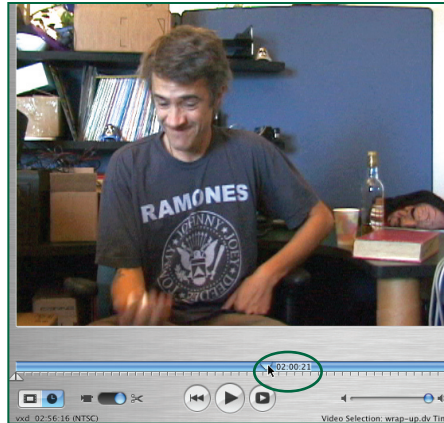
Because iMovie sometimes mishandles video and audio tracks, cobble together your movie in the clip viewer (shown here) or in the timeline viewer before swapping sounds.

2 Isolate Audio from Video If you haven't changed iMovie preferences to import video and audio on separate tracks during the import process, you'll need to extract the audio from every video clip you wish to sound-edit. From the iMovie menu, select Preferences. In the resulting dialog, uncheck the Use Short Time Codes box so you have a tighter time reference to control your audio syncing, and then close the window. In the timeline, select a clip that contains objectionable audio or less-than-stellar delivery. From the Advanced menu, select Extract Audio to separate the clip's audio from its video—the audio clip appears as a purple bar in audio track 1 below your video clip in the timeline.



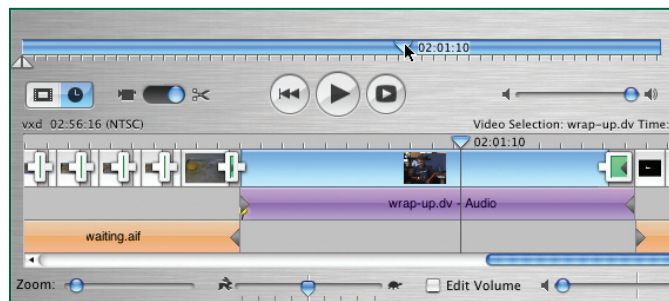
To edit audio, extract it from the video clip (if you haven't already set iMovie to do so automatically during DV import).

3 Mark the In Point To find the precise beginning of the audio you want to edit, click the play button to hear the audio, and then drag the playhead in the scrubber bar to the point just before you hear the objectionable stuff. Fine-tune the position by pressing the right-arrow key to nudge the video forward one frame per key press. When you think you're at the right point, jot down the time displayed to the right of the playhead (this is your *in point*), and click the play button. If you hear the unwanted word clearly in its entirety—you've hit the mark. If not, scratch out the time and try again: If the word or phrase is chopped off, move the playhead left; if important dialogue preceding the unwanted stuff is chopped off, move the playhead right.



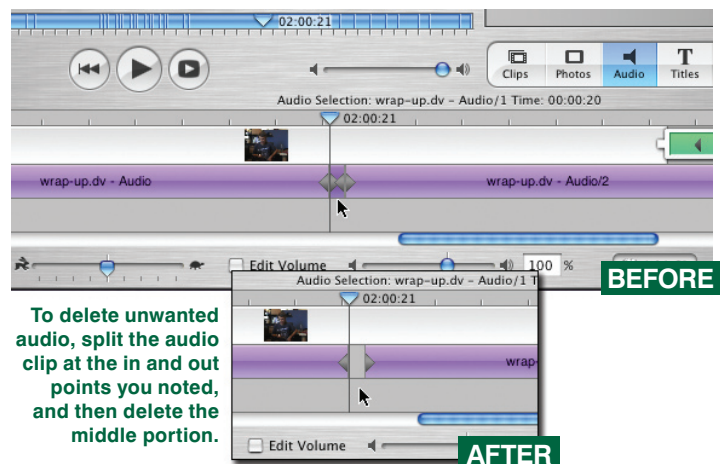
To make a precise edit, note the exact fraction of time (to the playhead's right) just before that first blunder occurs.

4 Mark the Out Point To find the precise point at which the audio you want to overdub ends, move the playhead in the scrubber bar to the point just after the last unwanted word is uttered (whether it's after a single word or phrase). Fine-tune by using the left-arrow key to nudge the playhead back a few frames to where you estimate the unwanted word ends, and jot down the time—this is your *out point*. Click the play button. If you hear part of the objectionable word, the playhead's too far left; if you hear part of a word that follows it, the playhead's too far right. Repeat this step as necessary until you find the exact out point.



Find the exact end point of the unwanted audio by moving the playhead to the target region and then using the arrow keys to nudge it with precision.

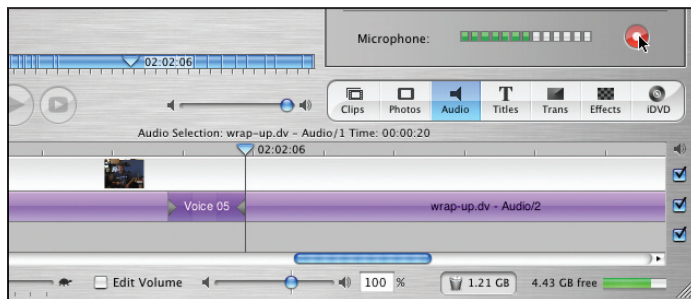
5 Drop Out the Audio For better precision, move the Zoom slider (bottom left) to the right to zoom in on the timeline tracks. Click the audio clip to select it, and drag the playhead in the scrubber bar to the in point you jotted down in step 3—use the arrow keys to fine-tune. (Warning: Do not drag the playhead in the timeline. Doing so will cause your audio to unsync if you press an arrow key.) From the Edit menu, select Split Selected Audio Clip At Playhead to splice the clip. Press Shift-Command-A to deselect the clips, and then click the audio clip on the right. Drag the scrubber playhead to the out point you noted in step 4, split the audio clip at the playhead, and deselect the clips again. Then select the middle audio clip and press Delete. Now play back your video to check your handiwork—you shouldn't hear the unwanted audio. If you want to fill the silence with a vocal overdub or sound effect, read on.



To delete unwanted audio, split the audio clip at the in and out points you noted, and then delete the middle portion.

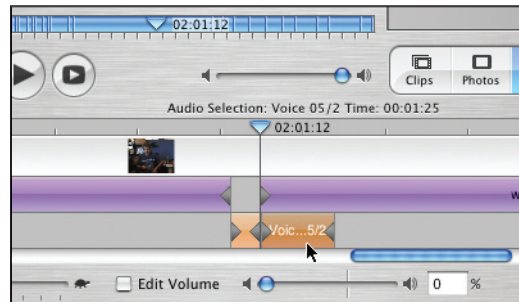
Dub In Dialogue

1 Punch In a Performance You've seen this type of audio edit in any edited-for-TV movie and in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones*. Preferably, you want the person who uttered the original words to record the overdub, but it's not a requirement. Click the Audio button to display the panel, and place your performer in front of your mic—either internal or external. Drag the playhead in the timeline to about 5 or 10 seconds before the dropout, and play the clip repeatedly so that he or she can study the speaker's lip movements and practice delivering the dialogue in sync. When ready, drag the playhead back, cue your performer, click play, and—just before the dropout comes up—click the record button (the red circle) to start recording (don't worry, you're not recording over the existing audio). Click the button again to stop recording after the last word is spoken.



Don't panic when you see your recording start to overlap your existing audio—you're not recording over it.

2 Crop Extraneous Sounds The overdub audio clip will appear to overlap the existing audio clips in audio track 1 in the spot where you deleted the original audio. To isolate the clip, drag it directly down to audio track 2 and click play to hear the performance. If the recording is out of sync, click the audio overdub clip and use the left- and right-arrow keys to nudge it so it's in sync with the video. Then crop the extra bits of audio before and after the dialogue delivery, using the split and delete methods discussed earlier, except that this time keep the *middle* portion and delete the *sides*. If the performance isn't dead on, delete the track and try again.

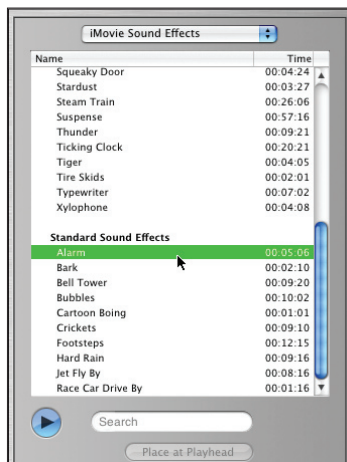


Once we recorded a golden performance, we split the audio clip twice and deleted the extra stuff before and after the overdubbed dialogue.

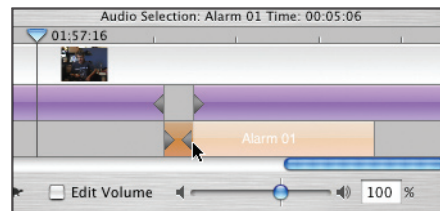
Slide In a Sound Effect

1 Find a Compatible Sound If you watch *The Osbournes* or any reality-TV show, you've heard the bleeps, squeaks, honks, and other zany sound effects that replace potty-mouth lingo. iMovie 3 comes with a few effects that work well for this purpose. Click the Audio button and select iMovie Sound Effects from the top pop-up menu. Then figure out the amount of time you need to fill by calculating the time difference between the in and out points you jotted down. Use the sound-effect times displayed in the panel as a loose guide, choosing sounds that are close to but a bit longer than the length you need. To hear a sound, double-click the effect's name. If you're replacing a single word, choose an effect with short sound instances, like Alarm, Bark, or Cartoon Boing. To roll your own, follow the instructions in "Dub In Dialogue," above, but record a sound effect instead of a voice.


Some sound-effect times may exceed the needed length—especially if you're replacing a single word—but you can manipulate them to fit.



2 Resize to Shorten When you find a sound that works within your time needs, drag the effect's name from the audio pane down to audio track 2, below the audio dropout in audio track 1. Move the clip so that its left edge lines up with the point where the dropout occurs. Drag the playhead in the timeline a few seconds prior to this spot, and play the clip to hear how the effect works here. Use the arrow keys to fine-tune the effect's placement if needed. If the clip is longer than the space, drag the right edge of the sound-effect clip to the left to shorten its duration (you can't slice an iMovie sound effect). Play the clip again; if the sound effect gets chopped off midway through a sound (for example, the second bark in Bark), shorten the clip a bit more so it ends just after the last completed instance—the remainder of the clip will play a fraction of silence.



Because you can't slice and dice iMovie's sound effects, resize the clip—shortening its duration—to fit your needs. Here, we shortened the Alarm effect to just one sound instance.

 Kris Fong had quite a few choice words to say about iMovie 3's performance on an iBook, but this bio has been edited for content.