

Gallery Virtual VTR

Looking for a random access video source and not sure of which way you ought to jump? If you have a spare Mac running OS9 or OSX knocking around then you could be thinking about pressing it into affordable and convenient picture duties. **ANDY DAY**

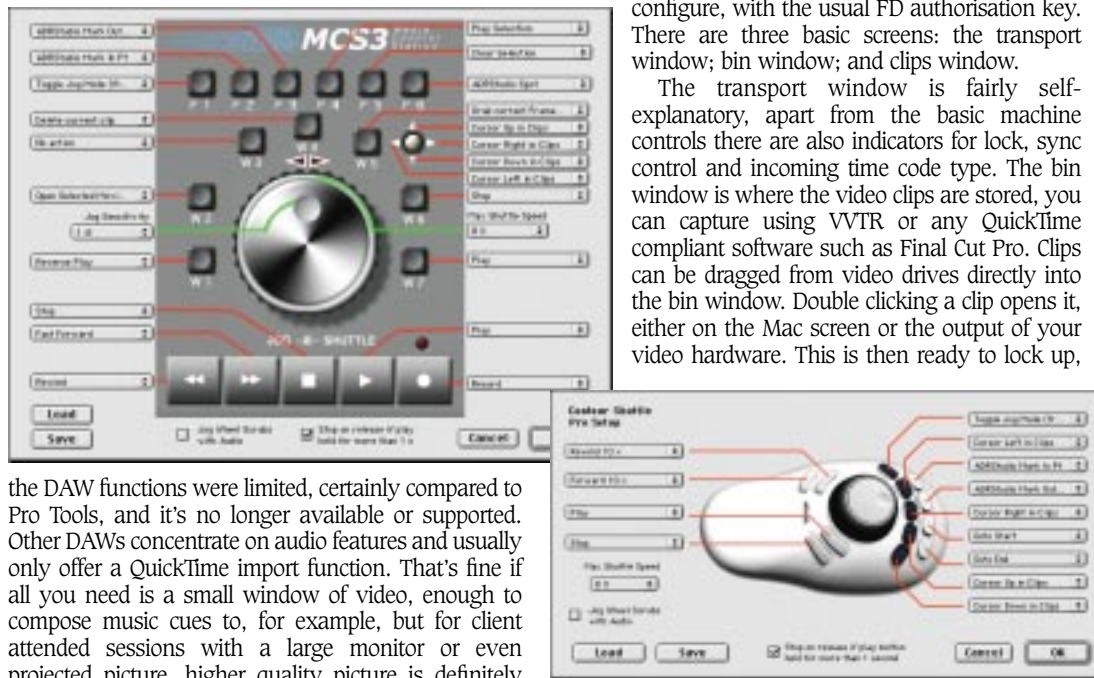
IF YOU HAVE EVER TRIED to use a DAW like Pro Tools with a beta SP, Digi beta or other tape-based video machine you'll know the frustration of waiting for tape to shuttle around to locate scenes. Whether it's voice-over recording or track laying, having nonlinear video is a positive boon, meaning no delays in rewinding tape or waiting for video machines to lock up.

AudioVision was great for this as it combined nonlinear video with a DAW, creating an easy workflow for people video editing on AVID. However

serial port (or imate USB to serial convertor) and a 9-pin to 8-way mini DIN cable. VVTR can emulate various Sony decks as well as the VMOD or Doremi V1. This makes integration of VVTR possible within many video editing set-ups, including AVID environments, where VVTR can be used as a way to 'payout' of an AVID system in QuickTime format. For the ultimate in tight video synchronisation it's recommended that you use a video hardware card with house sync or genlock input.

The Virtual VTR application is simple to install and configure, with the usual FD authorisation key. There are three basic screens: the transport window; bin window; and clips window.

The transport window is fairly self-explanatory, apart from the basic machine controls there are also indicators for lock, sync control and incoming time code type. The bin window is where the video clips are stored, you can capture using VVTR or any QuickTime compliant software such as Final Cut Pro. Clips can be dragged from video drives directly into the bin window. Double clicking a clip opens it, either on the Mac screen or the output of your video hardware. This is then ready to lock up,



the DAW functions were limited, certainly compared to Pro Tools, and it's no longer available or supported. Other DAWs concentrate on audio features and usually only offer a QuickTime import function. That's fine if all you need is a small window of video, enough to compose music cues to, for example, but for client attended sessions with a large monitor or even projected picture, higher quality picture is definitely needed. A few dedicated units have emerged over the years, but they are generally quite expensive. Virtual VTR from Gallery is a software product that claims to use virtually any Mac with a G3 processor (depending on video capabilities) to act as a nonlinear video machine, which means you can run video at any resolution. You can even run at HD uncompressed with a new G4 and a CineWave card.

The software works with any QuickTime media, so virtually any quality level can be synchronised to incoming time code or to 9-pin control. For DVD and multimedia applications this means that MPEG encoded video can be slaved to original audio elements, as a final sync check before authoring. Previously this would be a check disc process, which in the case of DVD means multiplexing and burning a disc first. As VVTR is software only, you do need to provide some means to synchronise to the outside world. This is done using MIDI, OMS and an outboard LTC to MTC convertor, such as the excellent Rosendahl MIF.

If you're using Pro Tools then you only need a MIDI interface for the VVTR machine, as Pro Tools can output MTC directly. VITC can be handled using a VITC to MTC convertor or 9-pin control by using the Mac

just feed it MTC and you have instant nonlinear video with your DAW.

If you capture using VVTR, the QuickTime file is time stamped according to the incoming LTC, so your DAW audio should be in perfect sync. However, there are some possible complications that can occur depending on the video hardware installed in your system. For example, using a DV codec, like the Formac studio, will introduce a 300ms delay in the video output. Luckily Gallery has thought of this and has various parameters that can be tweaked to get perfect results. If all this sounds like a real bore to set up, the good news is that you only have to do it once.

Location is done using MMC received from the DAW, but you can also transmit MMC back to the DAW allowing VVTR to act as master, this is where the clip window comes into action. By locating VVTR to a specific frame you can grab that frame and store it in the clip window. This then acts as a locate point (with a still image as a guide) that when clicked will locate VVTR and the DAW to the correct place. In this configuration VVTR is still a slave machine, but will tell the DAW where to locate. This is great when track laying programmes, as scene changes can be stored as clips in the clip window.

I used VVTR on a G4 800 with a Formac DV codec, a separate Pro Tools HD system and also a Pro Tools free set-up on a laptop. The laptop was used as a basic track laying system to spot effects, by outputting MTC directly to VVTR. The VVTR G4 could be scrubbed using a contour shuttle Pro, and the Pro Tools free software located perfectly, making this a very cost effective set-up for track laying. I then opened the session on Pro Tools HD, hooked up VVTR using MTC and mixed the tracks. The mix was bounced to AIFF in Pro Tools and finally imported into Final Cut Pro to sync up perfectly with the QuickTime file.

VVTR is excellent value at £549 (plus VAT), you only need to add a reasonable Mac with video capabilities and you have nonlinear video for virtually any DAW. ■

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PROS

Very cost effective way to add nonlinear video to a DAW; can be used in an edit suite as a QuickTime video digitiser; allows any QuickTime video content to be synchronised with audio; works particularly well with Pro Tools.

CONS

Needs a 'spare Mac' and a video card with Genlock for best sync; requires some initial set-up for best results.

EXTRAS

The Gallery Mtools SFX Environment allows AN entire sound effects or music library to be accessible at the click of a mouse with instant auditioning audio. It supports AppleShare IP, Personal Appleshare, OS X Server, NT, Network, or no server at all with Ethernet, fibre channel, and wireless in SDII, AIFF, WAV, MPEG, and MP3. It allows you to add more workstations, more storage, more sounds, and faster networking without having to change your Mtools setup, and without being dependant on a single technology supplier.

