

Making the most of your computer

Software and hardware – the latest tools

MoviePlus 5

James Taylor looks at how to immortalise your family history on video

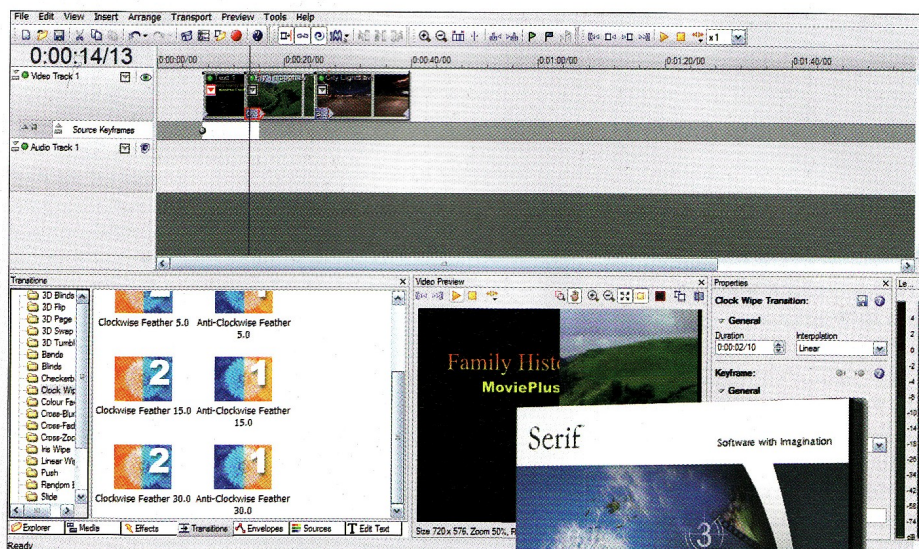
MoviePlus, now in version 5, is Serif's bid for the video-editing market, seemingly aimed at the beginner or intermediate user. Anyone thinking about creating a family film for future generations to enjoy will want to consider the use of such a program; it can capture videos from a range of sources, including video cameras, digital video mobile phones, hard drives or the internet, and allow you to edit and tinker with the footage before writing it to DVD. It can produce sophisticated slide shows from your scanned photos too.

Before starting a new project you can choose your preferred settings for the TV display, with widescreen options. The initial start-up screen presents you with an empty Timeline and Media pane (from here you can also open an existing 'project' and view the tutorials and samples). The timeline has one video track and one audio track, although you can add more of either. The Explorer pane opens your drives and network and there are tabs for media, effects, transitions, video preview, sources, edit text, and envelopes (envelopes control attributes like opacity, fades, perspective and aspect ratio).

The levels meter lets you adjust audio volume, while the Video Preview pane shows your completed work in real time. You may be able to control some of these effects and attributes in your video camera, but it's easier and safer to use software like this to edit, rather than the original footage of your once-in-a-lifetime wedding or reunion. Incidentally, always shoot or upload more footage than you think you'll need and allow extra at the start and end of a shot – with software like MoviePlus it's easy to trim surplus frames.

You can add any number of video clips to the timeline, and you get a couple of samples for practice. You can position a video on the timeline by dragging with your mouse. In the samples, the accompanying audio clip moves with the video. There's a video zoom for fine editing, which can include splitting a clip to isolate a section or to insert another clip into the gap.

You get a number of preset transitions to cover gaps between clips or to smooth the changeover, avoiding abrupt jump-cuts. Transitions available include 'iris wipe', 'cross-blur' and 'zoom and spin', as



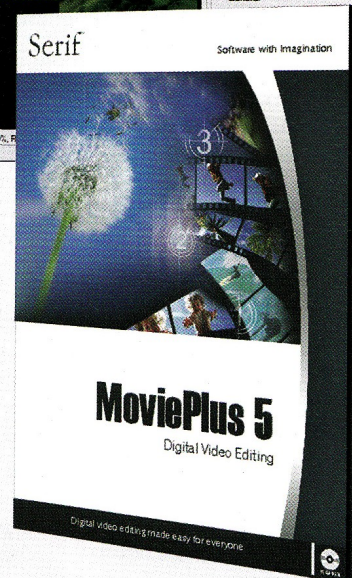
Designing and adding titles to your film is easy

well as 3D effects such as '3D page roll'. Implementing them is ridiculously easy: slide one clip partly over its neighbour and select the effect you want. The default transition is the 'cross fade', also known to filmmakers as the 'lap dissolve'.

Features new to version 5 include: wizards to produce auto-playing computer DVDs; pre-designed menu templates; chapter point creation; text enhancements with shadow, bevel, glow and emboss effects, and flexible placement; QuickShape masks (from PagePlus); 3D transitions; audio level meters; adjustable TV-safe border display; High Definition Video (HDV) support; reverse playback; and transparent overlays (for superimposition of titles or images).

You'll want a title and perhaps credits – MoviePlus 5 can do this for you too. There's a set of 'styles' with pre-designed themes for events such as parties, weddings, Christmas and so on. You can replace the default text with your own, or you can start from scratch with your preferred colours and fonts. MoviePlus 5 can automatically make room on the Timeline for the new text source.

MoviePlus 5 files are saved in MVP format. This file is then used to convert your video to a format that you can show to family and friends, complete with chapters and menu. You'll need a DVD writer drive for the final writing to disc stage. At the end, you'll have a family film produced and edited to your standards



that will auto-play in virtually all DVD players and is supported by DVD drives in computers with DVD-playback software.

This is all facilitated by the program CD, the new resource CD with tutorials, a printed 216-page user guide which provides an in-depth introduction to getting the most from MoviePlus 5, and a handful of project-based tutorials. You will need a copy of QuickTime (if you haven't got it already there's a copy on the CD). Available separately at £29.99, the MoviePlus Director's Collection DVD (not reviewed) promises collections of royalty-free music, sound effects, video clips, masks, and overlays.

MoviePlus 5 is available for £59.99 from Serif (www.serif.com) and can be bought from the website as a CD or as a download. It's also available from several online retailers and selected high street shops. ■

Look out for *MoviePlus* and more Serif software on *FHM's* free cover CD soon!