

Making Custom Menus in iDVD



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Apple's iDVD software is incredibly versatile and comes with several well-designed templates built-in. Templates are great (for a while), but you'll eventually hit a wall and want to start to customize your menus more. If you have access to any still or motion graphics applications, you can soon whip up your own menus.

The Specifications

DVD Menus have a lot of constraints... let's get our heads wrapped around what exactly can or can't be in a menu. If you are designing for the NTSC



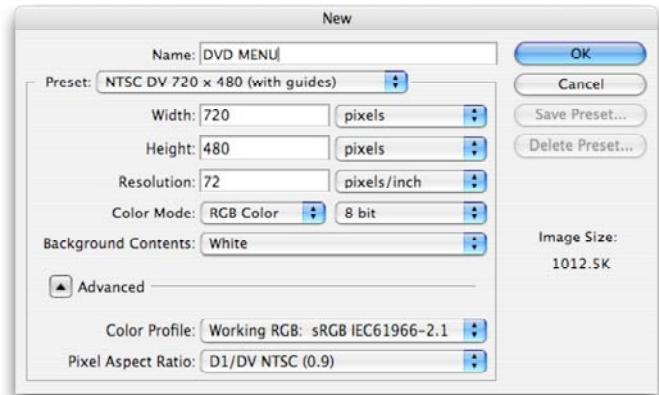
- Final image must be 720 X 480 non-square pixels
- Design Edge to Edge, but TV has a bleed area like print
- All viewable elements must fall within the 90% area, which is called the action safe area
- All type elements must fall within the central 80% area, which is called the title safe area



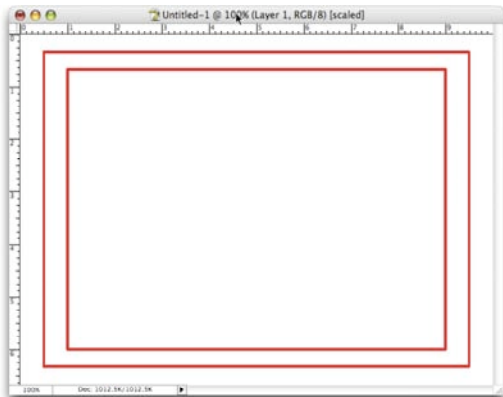
- If the menu is moving, be sure your movie file is set to render at 29.97 fps or 24 fps
- If using field rendering, be sure to render lower field first

The Title Safe Area

If you are working in Photoshop CS, your life is very easy. Just pick the preset NTSC DV 720 X 480 (with guides). This preset uses the correct non-square digital video pixels. If you are using any other version of Photoshop, you will need to create your own template.



1. Create a new document sized 720 X 534 pixels.
2. Create a New Layer, name it *Title Safe*, and highlight it.
3. Select>All or press Cmd+A (Ctrl+A).
4. Select>Transform Selection
5. In the Options bar for the selection link the width and height together and scale the selection to 90%, then click Commit (the checkbox).
6. Load a high contrast color such as red.



7. Choose Edit> Stroke and apply a 4-pixel centered stroke.
8. Once again, choose Select>All or press Cmd+A (Ctrl+A).
9. In the Options bar for the selection link the width and height together and scale the selection to 80%, then click Commit.
10. Choose Edit> Stroke and apply a 4-pixel centered stroke.
11. Design your menu.

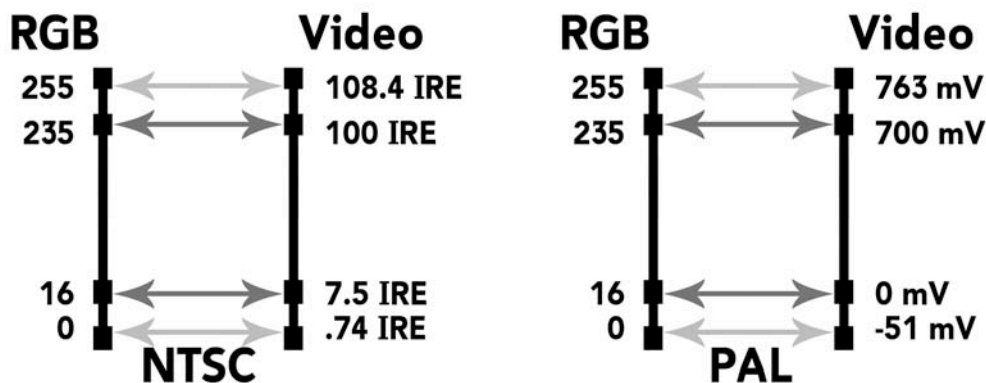
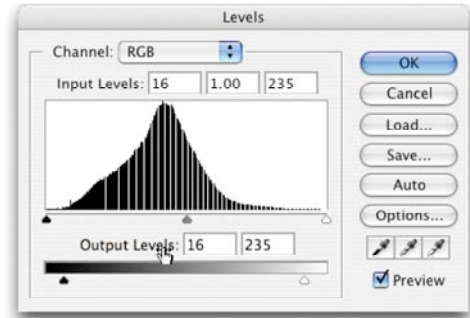
To use photos in your menu design

Be sure to scan or shoot your videos at a higher quality setting. This way you'll have extra pixels to use in your design. After fixing or stylizing the photo, you will need to crop it to size. If you intend to use the image full-screen or want to size the image to the correct video aspect, you need to perform a power crop.

1. Select the Crop Tool by pressing C.
2. In the options bar type in a width of 720 px (for pixels) and a height of 534 px. The resolution does not matter, as video works with a total pixel dimensions.
3. Crop the image to taste; remember video is a medium that works better with tighter shots. If you intend to use an image full-screen however, keep the Action Safe area in mind and leave some headroom.



4. Add a Levels Adjustment to make the image Broadcast Safe. You need to clamp the output levels to keep the image in the proper luminance range for television usage. Set the output levels to 16 for Black and 235 for White.
5. Copy & Paste or Drag & Drop the image into your DVD menu. When you add the images to a non-square document, Photoshop CS will automatically scale the images to size. If working in another program or version of Photoshop, choose Image>Image Size and set the height to 480 pixels.



Using Type

Remember when you were a kid watching Saturday morning cartoons? Did your Mom or Dad yell at you for sitting too close to the TV? “You’ll go blind!” Well that’s good advice to remember. Type for the Television screen is very different than for print or web. Here are some things to keep in mind when setting type in Photoshop.

- Use a larger point size. Stand up and walk 20 feet away from the computer screen. Can you still read it?
- White is 235 on a RGB scale, Black is 16. When picking colors for screen usage, do not exceed this color range for any of the RGB values.
- Be sure to anti-alias your type for smoother edges at low-resolutions.
- Photoshop layer styles help readability. Don’t over-bevel, but a light bevel can help. Also add a contrasting edge with either a glow or drop shadow. If you add layer styles, you must ‘flatten’ the styled layer so it will import



correctly. Do this by linking the effected layer to an empty layer. Then choose Merge Linked.

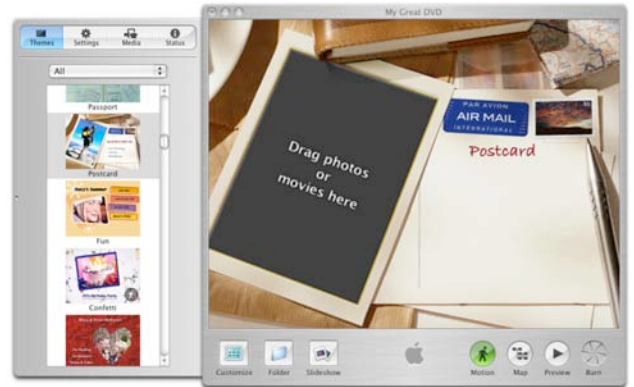
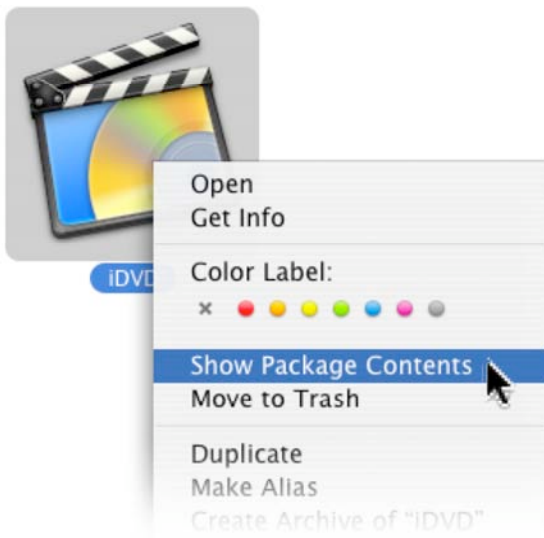
- Sans serif fonts are often easier to read on television sets. If using a serified font, be sure to use a true bold version, not a Faux Bold effect.

Hacking the System

Did you know that you could modify the pre-built templates? Here are several cool ways to tweak the stuff you already own.

Tweak the Movies

- 1.) Control click on the iDVD icon and say Show Package Contents
- 2.) Navigate the following path:
Contents>Resources
- 3.) Duplicate them and rename it.



- 4.) Control click on a theme and say Show Package Contents
- 5.) Navigate the following path:
Contents>Resources
- 6.) You can now modify the graphics in Photoshop.
- 7.) You can also open the movies in QuickTime Pro and apply color-changing filters. Move on to After Effects or Final Cut Pro for advanced options.

While you're there, you can throw away the PAL movies if you don't need them. You can also trash any templates you don't use to gain back hard drive space.

Change the Background

- 1.) Pick a theme that you'd like to use
- 2.) Click on the Settings tab
- 3.) Drag a new TIFF file or a movie file into the background well
- 4.) You can also change the button shapes and use those from other themes.

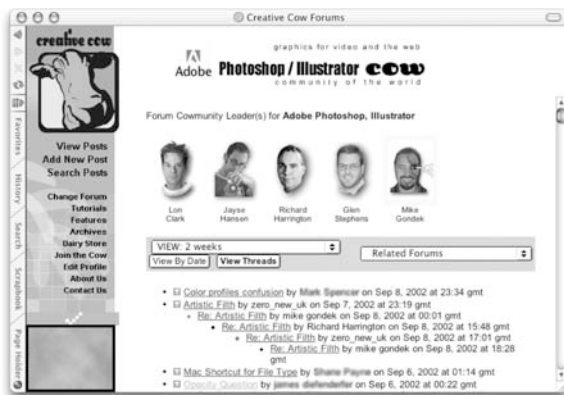
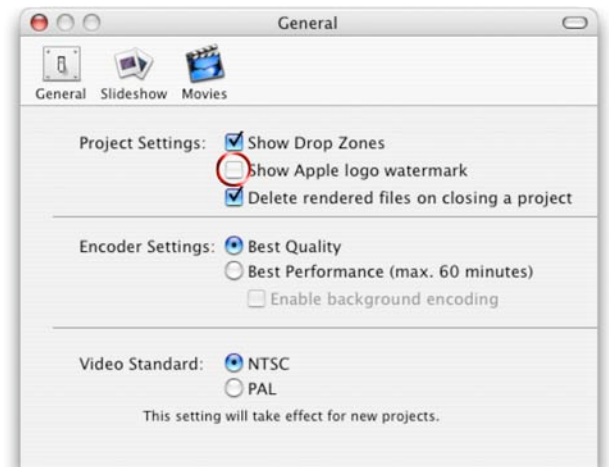


Turning off the Apple

While it's great to show your support for Apple, you probably don't want to put the apple logo all over your DVDs.

- 1.) Choose iDVD>Preferences
- 2.) Choose the General Tab
- 3.) Uncheck the box that says Show Apple logo watermark

While you're there, change the Encoder settings to Best Quality



Want to keep in touch?

The Creative Cow website (<http://www.creativecow.net>) offers several free forums and tutorials. With a distinct slant towards video professionals, the Photoshop/Illustrator forum offers a great place to look for ideas or troubleshooting advice.



Instructor: Richard Harrington

Richard Harrington is a certified Project Management Professional, Adobe Certified Expert in Photoshop and After Effects, and Apple-certified instructor in Final Cut Pro. Additionally, he has completed Avid's Master Editor Workshop and the Avid Certified Instructor Program. His visual communications consultancy, RHED Pixel, creates motion graphics and produces video and multimedia projects. He is a faculty member at The Art Institute of Washington, a popular speaker at conferences, and an instructor for Future Media Concepts. He is the author of Photoshop for Nonlinear Editors and as well as a moderator Creative Cow's Photoshop Forum.

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