

iDVD 4: Interface explained

With 20, yes 20 new themes, Autoload sequences, transitions for themes and slideshows, and two hours burn time, Apple has excelled itself with iDVD 4



Aims of this section
Task: Become familiar with iDVD 4
Difficulty: Beginner
Time needed: From 20 minutes

With what is arguably the best upgrade in the iLife suite, iDVD 4 is truly a joy to behold. This new version takes the existing interface and user-friendly style of DVD creation and bolts on additional functionality, which new and old users alike will love. It's easier to use than ever before, and also has some cool new tricks up its sleeve that allows you to put together sophisticated DVD menu interfaces. We've outlined a few of the key enhancements here and we'll be delving deeper into the new features of this gorgeous new product over the next few issues.

Enhanced integration with iLife

Those familiar with iDVD will notice that the 'Media' tab has replaced the three old file tabs for Audio, Photos and Movies. This new tab is at the heart of your content control. Here's what it offers:

- 1: Audio** – link to iTunes to drag and drop audio content into iDVD. This had been extended to include content created in GarageBand, music purchased from the iTunes Music Store and even Playlists.
- 2: Photos** – link to iPhoto. Enables you to drag and drop photographs into iDVD for slideshow, background and button imagery from your iPhoto 'Library' or from individual album folders, and even completed slideshows. Neat.
- 3: Movies** – links to the 'Movies' folder in your 'Users' folder. Allows access to your main movie files. You can preview them in the 'Asset' window.

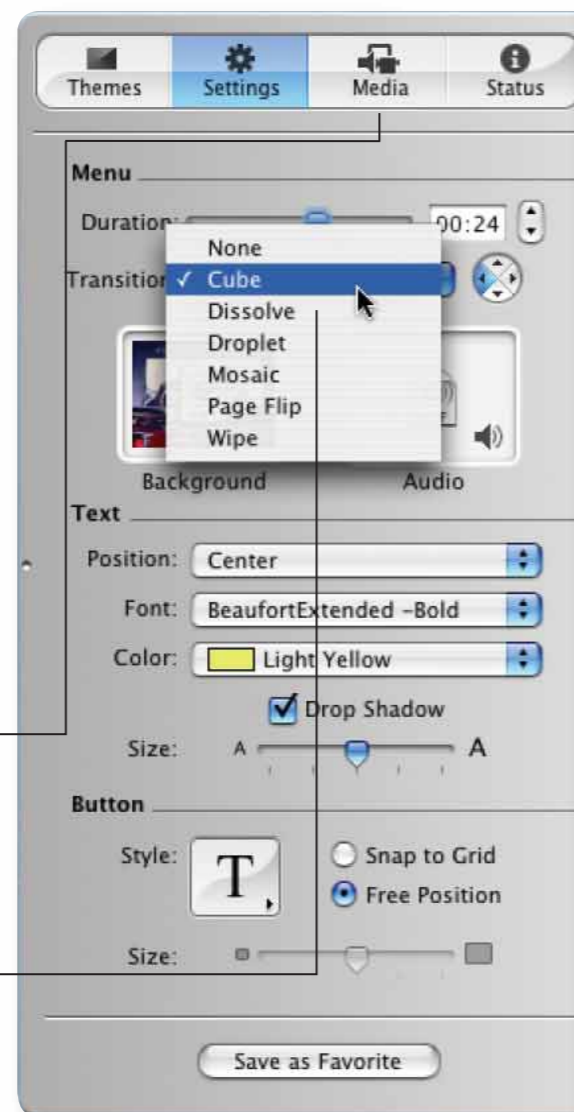
Keynote-style transitions

Ever seen the transition styles in Keynote? Well this time round, iDVD has delivered a clutch of similar transitions for between each menu. So instead of moving direct from menu to menu, iDVD now gives users the opportunity to add a 'Wipe', 'Mosaic', 'Page Flip', 'Dissolve', 'Droplet', or the most impressive of all – a 3D 'Cube' rotation.



1 Transitions can't be added in 'Map' view, so click on the menu screen you want to use as your starting point. iDVD will move to your chosen screen. Using the drag-down menu, select the transition action you want to use.

2 This activates the transition between the current screen and all menus your buttons point to. So, on our example, the main menu will rotate 'cube-style' through to the three other menu screens.



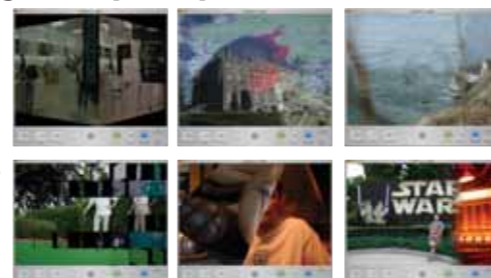
The Text tool
 Adding descriptive text to your screens
 Cool, huh? iDVD now lets users add any text to any menu. Just drag down to the 'Add Text' option from the 'Project' menu and start writing!



Looping discs
 Creating a presentation or party disc
 iDVD now supports looping discs, which enables you to play your DVD movie over and over again. Very handy for presentations, party movies or music DVDs.

Slideshow options get souped up

iDVD has been screaming out for slideshow transition styles, à la iPhoto and here they are. You get six slide transition states, which are the same as the menu transitions. The drawback here is that you can only choose one transition style for each slideshow. Perhaps a little limiting for ambitious iDVDers. Here's a snapshot of each.

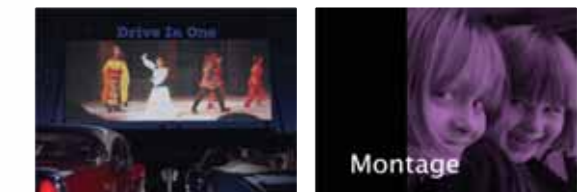


New Map button

To get a complete overview of how your iDVD project is laid out, you can take advantage of the new 'Map' view feature. Structured in a similar way to a family tree, 'Map' view allows you to instantly see what connects to what, and gives you the ability to see each menu of your project in a 35mm transparency slide-style preview window. It's here that you can also add one of the best additions to iDVD 4: the 'AutoPlay' segments. This feature allows you to add preloaded credits, transitional movie files or even an 'FBI-style' content warning at the start of your disc!

Virtual Theme park with AutoPlay

Every new version of iDVD ships with some new themes, and iDVD 4 doesn't disappoint. There are 20 new themes, some better than others, but the cool thing this time round is that a few offer 'AutoPlay'. This enables you to select a short movie file to play automatically when the DVD starts up. Check out the 'Marquee' theme to see what we mean. Here's a list of the five 'AutoPlay' themes in iDVD 4.



Drive-In
 Good for local amateur dramatics productions

Montage
 Perfect for presentations or family memories



Kids Theater
 It's not just for kids! Perfect for all fun movies

Road Trip
 Classic interface look for taking that Route 66 trip



Marquee
 Great for razzle-dazzle, stylish but fun productions

Plus:
 'AutoPlay' also allows you to play a slideshow of pictures before a menu appears. Or how about this? It's possible to preplay an entire movie or slideshow. So when you insert the disc, it'll play without any menu options popping up at all!

The Knowledge Base: Enhanced burning

Up to two hours on a DVD?
 iDVD 4 now utilises the same video compression technology as Apple's pro standard utility 'Compressor'. Normally bundled with DVD Studio Pro 2 and Final Cut Pro, the new method of compression first analyses the entire file, and then uses the previous analysis to intelligently distribute the bit allocation for each frame of video. The result is an optimised MPEG-2 video file with consistent visual quality at high quality.



How to set enhanced burning
 You can set the options for encoding in the 'Preferences' menu. The default is for 'Best Performance' (max 60 minutes), but toggle on the radio button for 'Best Quality' and iDVD 4 goes into Pro-mode burning setup. This enables the 'Compressor' settings.