A guide to burning DVDs on the Mac, without using Toast

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Introduction
This guide explains how you can burn DVDs from recorded programmes using your Macintosh, without having to invest in lots of extra software. There are many different ways of burning DVDs, some quicker and easier than others. Roxio's Toast, for example, will do much of the work for you, but at £70, it's a little expensive if you're not going to use it very often. So in this guide, we'll concentrate chiefly on free software, with just one thing that you need to buy.

What you'll need
• Apple OS X. This guide was created using OS X 10.3.
• An Apple-supported DVD burner.
• QuickTime MPEG 2 component. This is available for both Quicktime 6 and Quicktime 7, which is part of OS X 10.4. It costs £19, and is the only software you need to pay for to burn DVDs using this guide.
• MPEG Streamclip. This free software connects your Mac to the TF5800 and allows you to download recorded programmes. It also allows you to transfer TAPs, and to convert video to and from different types of MPEG format.
• Sizzle.. This is a free DVD authoring programme, which lets you create simple menus and even add chapters to DVDs.
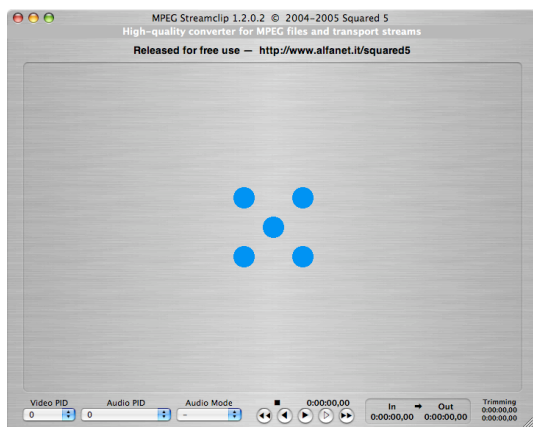
If you can't access the links for any of the software in the version of this document that you're reading, you can find links to the latest versions in the Toppy.org.uk software library, at www.toppy.org.uk/downloads/mac.php.

Software installation
Both MPEG Streamclip and Sizzle are installed by simply dragging the application into the Applications folder on your hard drive when the disk image has downloaded. To install the QuickTime MPEG2 component, you will need to double-click on the package file after you're purchased it from the Apple online store, and work through the normal Apple software installation process.

Step 1: Connecting to your Toppy using MPEG Streamclip
The first stage in burning your DVD is downloading the programme files from the Toppy. Connect one end of a

good quality USB cable to your Mac and the other to the socket on the rear of the TF5800. When you launch MPEG Streamclip, you'll see a screen a little like the one on the left. If it's the first time you've run the program, you'll need to enable the USB connection to your Toppy. To do that, choose preferences from the application's menu and ensure that there's a tick next to the option labeled Enable Altair.
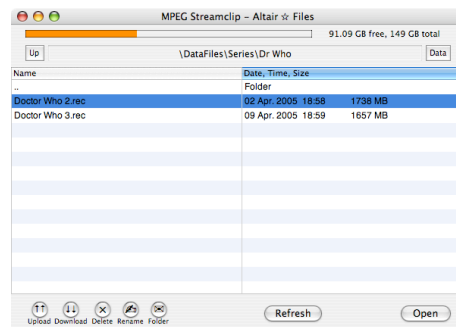
Now you can connect to your TF5800 by selecting *Files...* from the Altair menu. You'll initially see three folders, *DataFiles, ProgramFiles,* and *MP3*. The ProgramFiles folder is where you can store TAPs, MP3 is for music files, and DataFiles is where recorded programmes are saved. In the second screen, we've browsed to a folder within another folder, containing a number

of recorded programmes. You can download a file to your computer's hard drive by highlighting it and clicking the Download button at the bottom of the window, but if you've added time at the start and end of a recording, it's often more convenient to remove that at this stage, so you download just the bit of a file that you want to burn to DVD.

To move up a level when you're browsing, click the Up button or click the .. entry that appears at the top of all sub-folders.
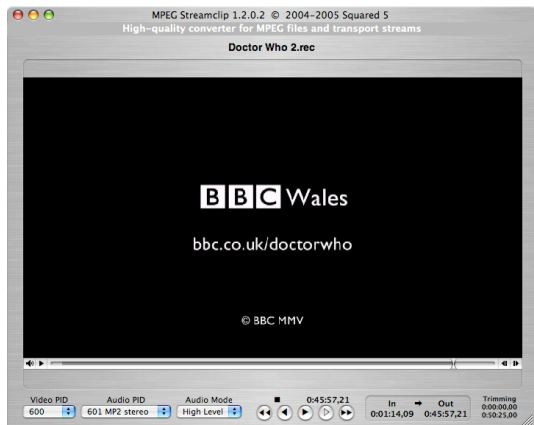
Turbo mode
Before we explain further, a quick word about the Turbo mode option that you'll see on MPEG Streamclip's Altair menu. When this is enabled, file transfers via USB are much faster, but the Toppy will not respond to remote control commands, and it may also miss some recordings. We recommend that you don't use Turbo mode if you're watching TV and might want to change channels or volume, or if there are recordings going on. Fortunately, you can turn Turbo on and off whenever you want during a transfer. You will need it enabled to give you smooth playback during the next step.

Step 2: Selecting a section of a recording
Highlight a recording, and instead of clicking the Download button, click on Open. If you have an older Mac without USB2, this may take a little while. When the file has opened, you'll see the first frame of it appear in the main MPEG Streamclip window. Now you can use the play button at the bottom of the window to start watching the programme. You can click Pause to stop, and use the left and right arrow keys to move more precisely through the show.

You can also drag the pointer to a particular position, but be warned that this is not very responsive. It's also possible to play backwards, using the backward facing play button.

It's at this stage that you can mark the start and end of the programme, so that any padding either side of it will be omitted from your DVD.
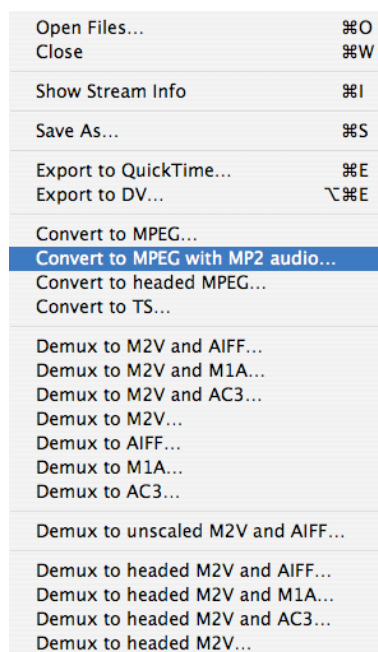
As the file is playing, or when you've located the precise point where you want your DVD to start, using the left and right arrows, press I to mark the 'in' point. You'll see it marked towards the bottom right of the window. Find the place where you want the clip to stop, and press O to mark the 'out' point. The area between the two will be highlighted in grey on the progress bar, and is the area that all subsequent functions will work on.

Now, you need to copy the file to your hard disk. Click the File menu. You now have a few options. If you want to simply transfer the section of the file to your hard drive and convert it to the right format for DVD later, choose Save As. Otherwise, choose Convert to MPEG, and the file will be converted as it's transferred from your Toppy. This is slower, but saves saving and then converting.
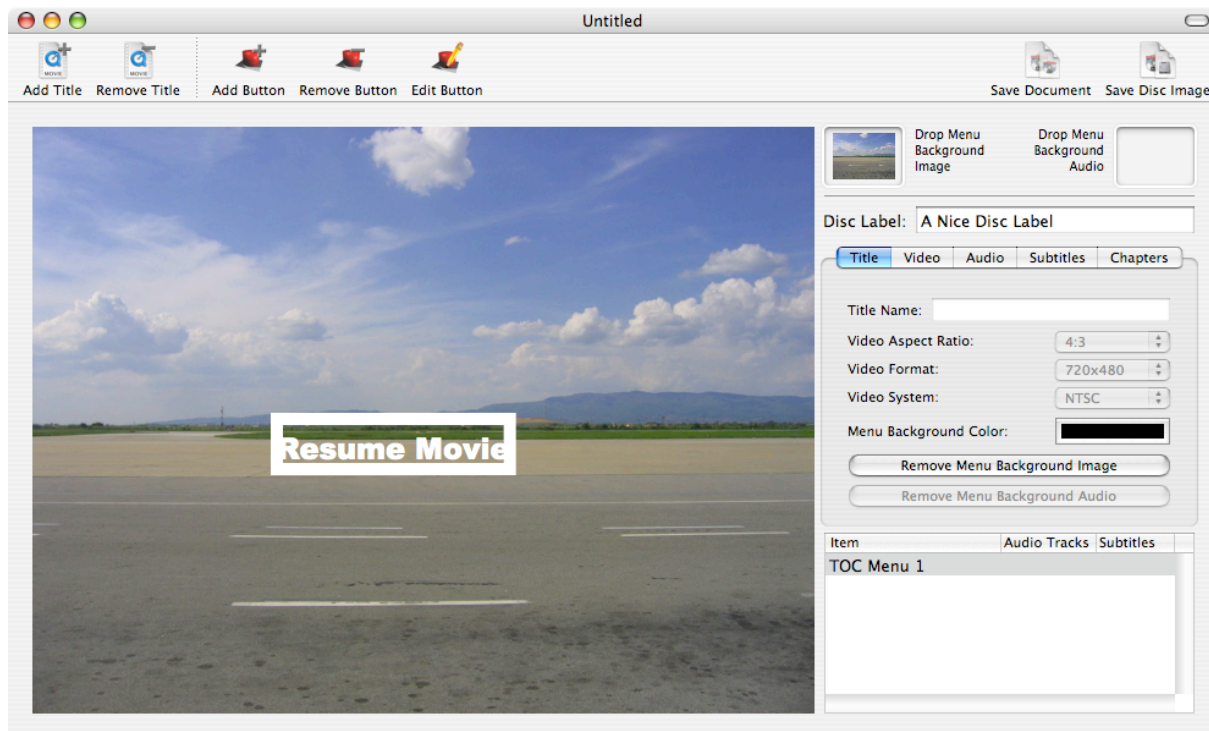
In each case, you'll need to choose a name for the file on your hard drive, and then wait while it's transferred. If you just save the file, you can open it in MPEG Streamclip later, and perform the conversion in the same way.

When the file has converted, you can prepare another one in the same way, or start creating a DVD from it.

Step 3: Creating a DVD disc image with Sizzle
Sizzle is a very simple DVD creation tool. It doesn't actually burn DVDs, but it allows you to create menus and then save a disc image file, which you can burn to create your final DVD.

When you first start the program, you'll see a display very similar to this one, but with a black screen. We've dragged an image file on to the Menu Background Image box at the top right. The Resume Movie text in the middle is a default button. You should give your DVD a name in the Disc Label box. Next, click the Add Title button, and choose the MPEG file you created in the previous step. You'll see the file appear in the box at the bottom right, listed as Title 1. You can click on it, and add an image to appear on its menu. In our example, we've used the same background image for each menu, so it simply appears that the words on a menu change.
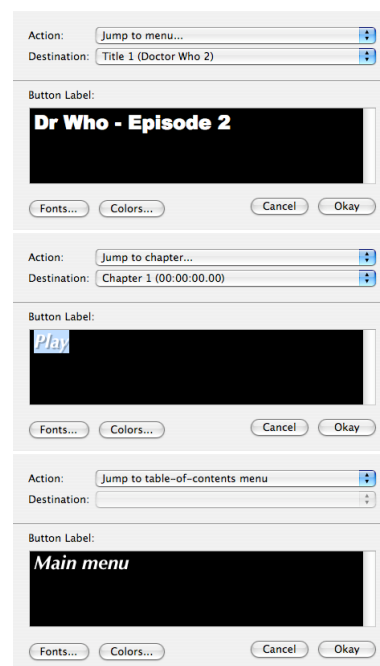
Menus and titles explained
When you create a DVD using Sizzle, there is a top level, or Table of Contents Menu. This can then link to a Title menu, which can have several items on it. At the least, it should have a button to jump to Chapter 1, which will start playing the video, and probably a button to jump back to the TOC menu.

Set your video options correctly!
To make sure that your DVD plays correctly, make sure you set the options correctly for each title that you add. Although the right hand options for Video Aspect Ratio, Video Format and Video System are not available on the disc main menu screen, they are activated for each MPEG file that you add. You should normally set the Video System to PAL, the Video Format to 720x576, and then select an aspect ratio of 4:3 for a normal picture, or 16:9 for a widescreen one.

You now need to add buttons. Click on TOC Menu 1, and add a button set up like the top of our examples, jump to menu, Title 1. Now click on Title 1 and add a play button, jump to chapter, chapter 1. Our final example is a back button, which jumps back to the table of contents menu.

Note that you can use the Fonts and Colors buttons to change the look of the buttons, and you can also drag images into the button boxes, to use them instead of text. Now you're almost ready to create your DVD.
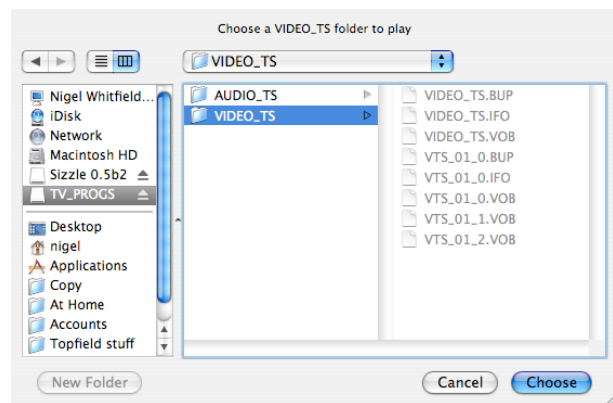
Step 4: Creating and testing a DVD

When you're happy with the placement and design of your buttons, and you've added any chapters that you'd like on your DVD, together with links to them, click the Save Document button at the top of the Sizzle window. This will save the details of the Sizzle layout for your DVD, but not the DVD itself.

Next, click Save Disc Image, and give a name for the image file. This will be saved with the .dmg extension, and like other disc images, it will be mounted as a disk if you double click it.
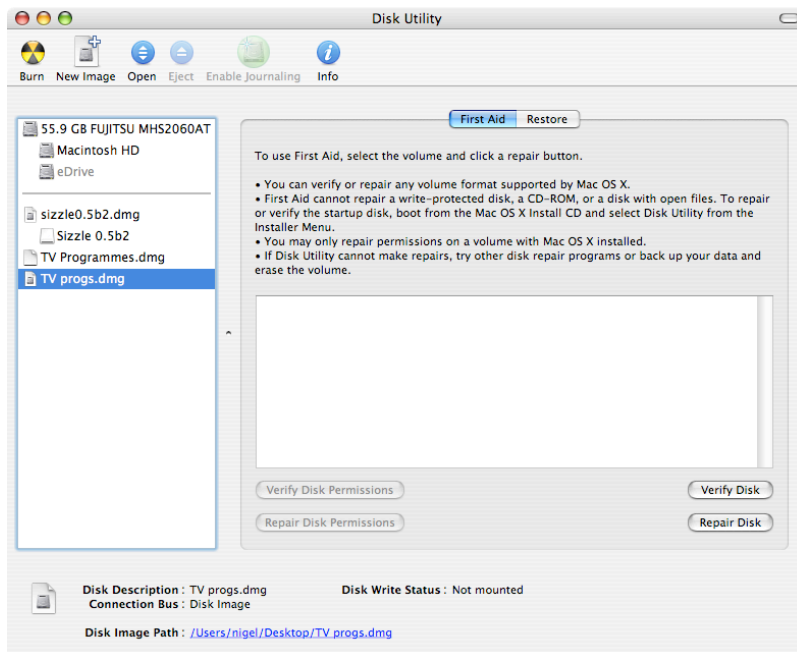
Wait

Sizzle will now re-encode the MPEG files, and create the menus for your DVD. Go and make a cup of coffee - this is a long process, especially if you have an older, slower Macintosh. You'll see a progress bar on screen, though it may appear to be doing nothing for a large part of the time. Don't worry - it will get there in the end.

When the disk image has been created, you can test your DVD before burning it. Double click the image to mount it, then start the Apple DVD player, and then from the file menu, choose Open VIDEO_TS folder. When the file browser appears, locate your mounted disk image in the left hand panel - ours is called TV_PROGS - and browse to the VIDEO_TS folder, then click the Choose button. DVD Player will play the DVD just as if it were a real one that had been put in the drive. If you're happy, now you can proceed to burning.

Step 5: Burning your disc image to a DVD

To burn your image, start Disk Utility, which is located in the Utilities folder, within the Applications folder. When Disk Utility starts, if you don't see the image file you created listed in the left hand panel, drag it from the Finder. You should see something like the screen shown here.

Click to highlight the disk image file, and then click the Burn icon at the top left of the Disk Utility window. The normal burning dialogue box will pop up, and you should insert a blank DVD, then click Burn again, when you've chosen other options, such as burn speed and whether or not to verify after burning.

If all is well, you'll have a working DVD, which should play back in all but the oldest domestic DVD players.

If you have any problems, pop along to the Forums on www.toppy.org.uk and ask for advice.

Nigel Whitfield, May 2005