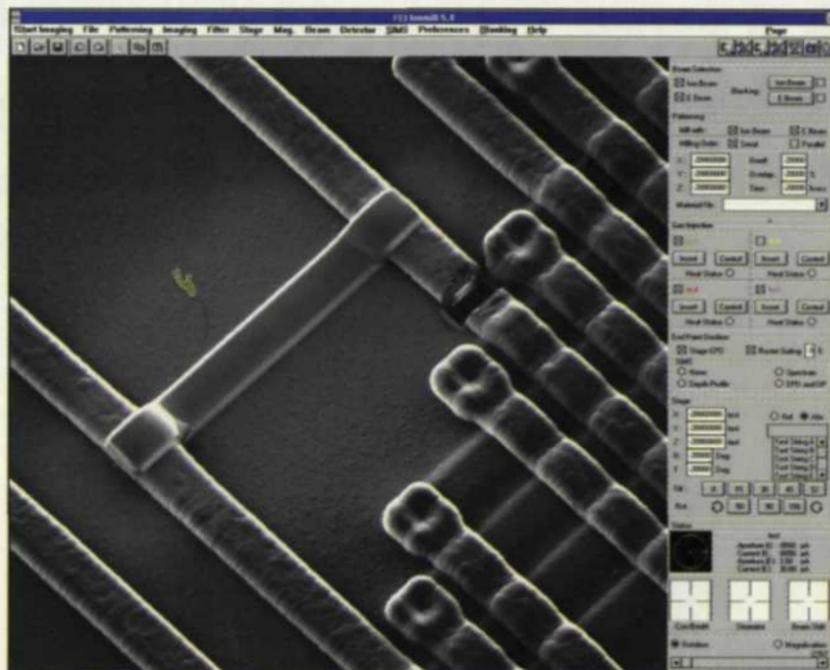


DIGITAL DIRECTIONS

In the infancy of computer imaging, the screen capture function was generally used for emergencies. When you wanted to show the repairperson what a specific screen looked like, you pressed a combination of keys to send a copy of the screen to your printer. In recent years, however, screen capture has expanded and become a tool for education, product evaluation, job billing and software promotion—in addition to troubleshooting.



Sample of screen capture image brought into our lab for output from inkjet to poster.

Screen Capture in the

THE TECHNIQUE FOR screen capture is still simple to apply, but with some tweaking you can vary your results considerably. You can apply the techniques we will cover to your own work in the photo lab, or pass them on to customers so they might better prepare their screen files for digital output in your lab.

The first step in setting up a high quality screen capture is to maximize your screen resolution. Most video cards and monitors today give you a variety of screen resolutions. Since screen capture uses the resolution of your screen, you want to set it at a level that will give the best quality output.

For example, most of our computers can switch from 640 x 480 to 1164 x 864 by pressing the right mouse button and selecting the resolution that best fits the application and viewing needs. We have found that 800 x 600 is about the lowest resolution that should be used to maintain clean lines, fonts and any bitmap images that may appear on the screen.

If you use very small fonts with your screen, you may want to go to the control panel and change the fonts to large bold fonts so that they are more legible. Try to avoid fancy fonts with screen capture, as many find the more unique fonts hard-

er to read. When you are done with the screen capture, you can go back to the control panel to reset the size and font type.

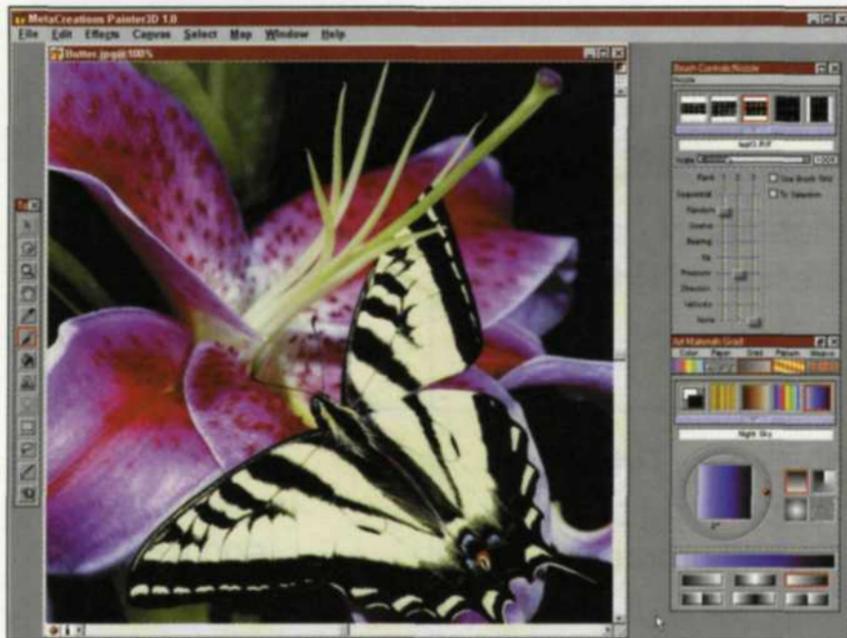
If you plan to output your screen captures to slides via a film recorder, you may also want to change the colors and shades of the screen itself to darker tones. Film recorders tend to have more trouble recording black type against a white background.

You may have to experiment with light shades of gray or pastel colors until you get the right combination of fonts and backgrounds for film recorder output. If your goal is to send the screen output to digital paper, stay with black text against a white or very light background.

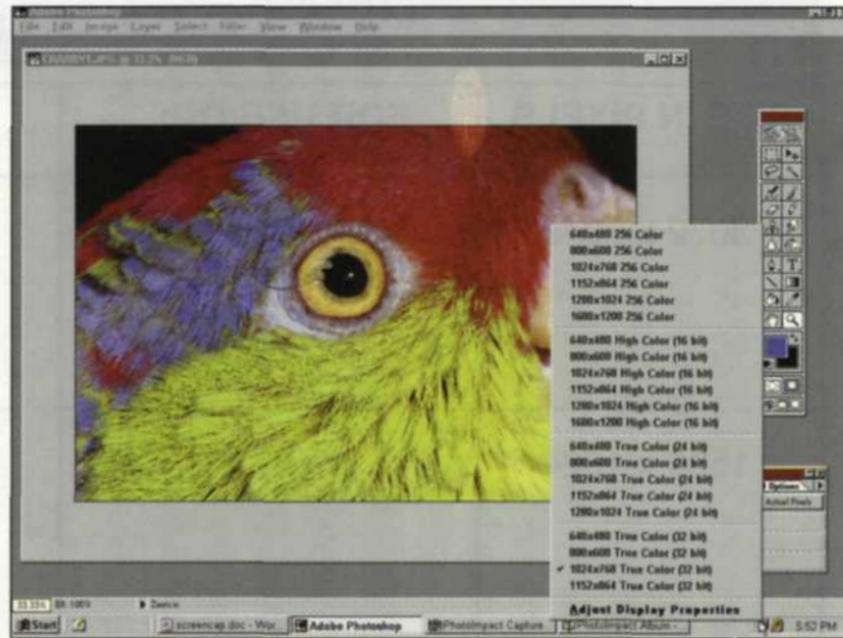
Check your control panel to see your color level setting. If you are using less than 24 bit color, you might want to up the color levels to 24 or 32 bit color. This will provide better tonal gradation in the final output image.

Up to now we have talked in generic terms about screen capture. So what programs provide the best screen capture? From past experience (mainly by trial and error), we have found that many of the database and photo album programs have excellent screen captures.

One of our favorites is *Photo Impact Screen Capture* by



Sample of screen capture image brought into our lab for output from inkjet to poster.



Sample of screen capture image brought into our lab for output from inkjet to poster.

Digital Lab

Jack & Sue Drafahl

Ulead Systems. This program concentrates on gathering images for a database, but has an extension program that does excellent screen captures. The file converter is another type of program offering screen capture.

Hijaak for Windows from Inset concentrates on converting one file to another, but also has a screen capture as a Windows utility.

If you don't want to buy a full blown image capture program, log onto the NET and check out some of the freeware programs. When we searched for "Screen Capture", we found over 50 different programs that offer the basic function.

Most screen capture programs have a variety of methods for selecting the area for screen capture. The default is to capture the entire working screen to file, workspace, or printer. Check your program under "types of screen capture" and you may find that the program can capture the working window, menu under pointer, or a specific selected area.

If you desire only a selected area to capture, use your cursor to draw an eclipse or rectangle around a specific area on the screen and capture it to file or printer. We like this function for lectures as you can show the entire screen to establish the overall situation, and then select a specific area

and zoom in.

One of the best functions found in a good screen capture program is the *destination* function. When you press the screen capture hot key, the screen image will be sent to the laser printer, inkjet, or film recorder.

If you are putting together a training session on a specific editing technique for your employees, you can screen capture to a printer as you work on a project. You can then go over the printouts with your employees and show them how you did it.

We also find this technique is great for billing those really complex jobs to make sure that nothing fell through the cracks. We just mentioned the use of a hot key to activate the screen capture function. Be careful, as you may already have many hot keys in operation, and if you set your screen capture to one of these other functions, your computer may do things other than screen capture!

We have tried many combinations and have found that the F12 key seems to be the least used by any other programs. If you still have trouble with this key, try shift F12, control F12, or alt F12 to make your screen captures. If you want to make screen captures off the Net, you're almost there. If you

RESOLUTION CHART

SIZE IN PIXELS	FOR USE ON:	BEST USED FOR:	SIZE OF FILE
3072 x 2048	Super Res CD	High Quality and Professional Printing	18 Mb Uncompressed 5mb JPEG Compressed
1536 x 1024	CD	High Quality Printing on paper, and photo novelty products	4.5 Mb Uncompressed 500 Kb JPEG Compressed
768 x 512	Disk/ Internet	Viewing on Screen, Low Resolution Printing	1.4 Mb Uncompressed JPEG
600 x 400	Disk/ Internet	E-mail or use on Web Page	720 Kb Uncompressed JPEG
192 x 128	Index Print	Index Prints, E-mail	180 Kb Uncompressed JPEG

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set your Internet image cache to several days, you will find a directory full of images captured as you surf through the various home pages.

When we want to see what is in that directory, we run a catalog database of that directory, and in a few minutes we have thumbnails of all the images. If you want to capture a full screen of a Net page, just turn on the screen capture function and press the hot key. We use this function often when we are doing specific research on an article. We start surfing the Internet, and when we like what we see, we either print the page, or do a screen capture and move on to the next home page.

One final word about screen capture. It is an unfortunate fact that most editing systems look different when presented on various computer monitors. A client may see deep blue backgrounds, but when the file is imaged by your lab, it may be quite different. This just boils down to educating the customer and matching systems. If they are a repeat customer, you may want to run several samples through your lab so they may tweak their computer viewing system to satisfy their needs.

Not all customers will listen when you tell them the best way to bring you jobs, so a backup plan is necessary. One of

the main problems we encounter is when a client makes screen captures with no borders, and they want slides as a final output.

If these images are sent to a film recorder, much of the screen information will be hidden under the top and bottom edge of the slide mount.

Our solution was to make an "Action" file in Adobe PhotoShop that adds an 8- to 10-percent black border around the image and saves out a new file. By using the action command, you can apply it to all the images, and in a few minutes you are ready to send the corrected images to a film recorder.

Many things in life seem to come full circle. We still use screen capture as a troubleshooting tool, but our now complex screen is in Windows, not DOS. Best of all, screen capture can now be used for a whole lot more. Include screen capture in your digital lab, and you may find that it captures even more than pixels. It may capture money for your bank account!

Jack and Sue Drafaul own and operate a custom lab in Portland, Oregon. They are also professional photographers, specializing in underwater photography.