Cast 2 Time

A New Media Authoring Presentation

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New Media Authoring

Software Tools Research Report

Chosen feature - 'Cast to time' sub-menu in the program 'Director'

Cast to time

The 'Cast to time' option is a fairly basic feature in Director which allows multiple cast members to be turned into a single sprite. Having imported your required images into the cast window, choosing 'cast to time' will place them in the score window as just one sprite. Director also contains other features for creating and aligning multiple cast members for animation such as 'Space to time' or 'Onion Skinning'.

Here are the four simple steps required to create one sprite from a sequence of cast members -

1) Choose the frame in the score where you want to place the sprite

2) Open the cast window

3) Select the required series of cast members

Tip: Hold down Shift on the last then first cast member and all cast members inbetween will be selected

4) Hold down the Alt key (Pc users) or Option key (Mac users) and drag the selected cast members to the score or stage (choosing Modify>Cast to Time will perform the same task).

The selected series of cast members will now appear as one sprite in both the Score and Stage windows.

Comments

In practice you should only use Cast to Time when you have decided definitively upon the order in which your cast members should be placed. It is important to remember that the cast members will be

arranged in the new sprite in the **same** order as they appear in the cast window. If you are not sure of the required sequence of your images then you should experiment with them by dragging them into the score one at a time, so that each appears as its own sprite. You can then reposition them to create the desired sequence. If you still want to use Cast to time you will have to then go back and rearrange each cast member in the Cast window.

Cast members need to have the correct dimensions, choice of ink , blend etc before using Cast to Time because they will not be individually editable when part of the new single sprite. Any alteration of parameters such as these will affect the whole sprite and thus each cast member contained within.

The new sprite will have a length spanning the same number of frames as there are selected cast members (ie ten cast members produce a sprite spanning ten frames).

One drawback to the feature as a whole occurs when alterating the length of the sprite. If the size of a 'cast to time created' sprite is modified from ten frames to eleven, then one cast member contained within will have to span two frames rather than one. It might seem logical that if a ten frame sprite were lengthened to 20 frames then each cast member would span two frames .However, Director does not always spread each cast member out over an even number of frames. What is more, it can delete some cast members from the lengthened sprite and there does not appear to be any way of predicting which one(s) will be deleted.


Similar Director features

If you want your cast members to span more than one frame inside a single sprite, you should instead use the 'Space to Time' function which turns sprites in adjacent channels in the score into a single sprite. This feature allows you to choose the spacing between each sprite in the newly created sprite. 'Space to Time' can be chosen when multiple sprites are on the stage or in the score .

'Onion Skinning' is a little more advanced and allows you, among other things, to create a new cast member based on an existing cast member. You can trace over an existing cast member (situated in the background) to create your new image. This is particularly useful when you want to create a new image which is only slightly different from an existing cast member. The term 'onion skinning' in fact derives from a technique used by traditional animators who used to draw on very thin 'onion skin' paper so that they could see the previous image(s) through it. This is more popularly known as 'tracing'. 'Onion Skinning' can be chosen from inside the Paint window.

Performing 'cast to time' in four simple steps
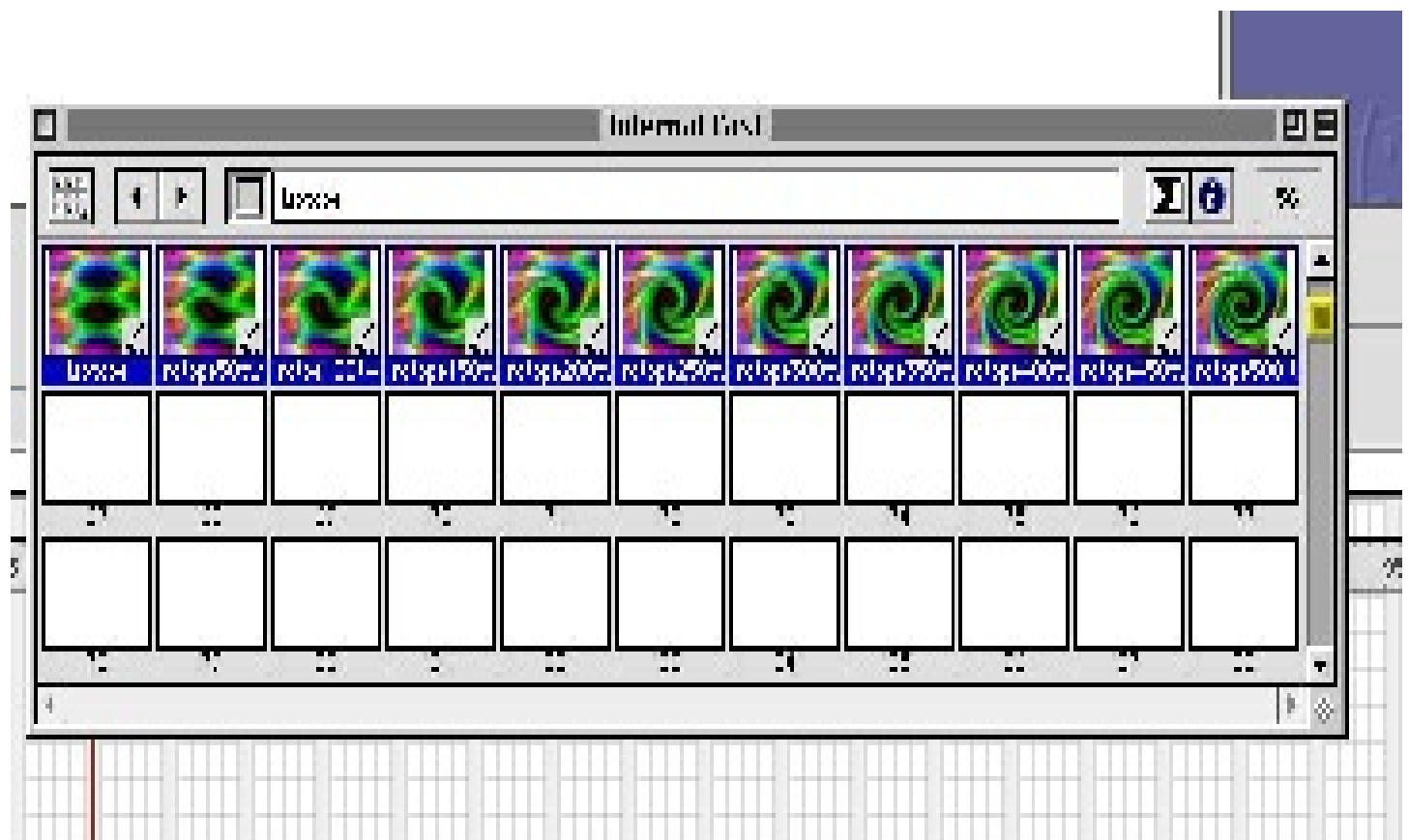
1) Choose the frame in the score where you want to place the sprite
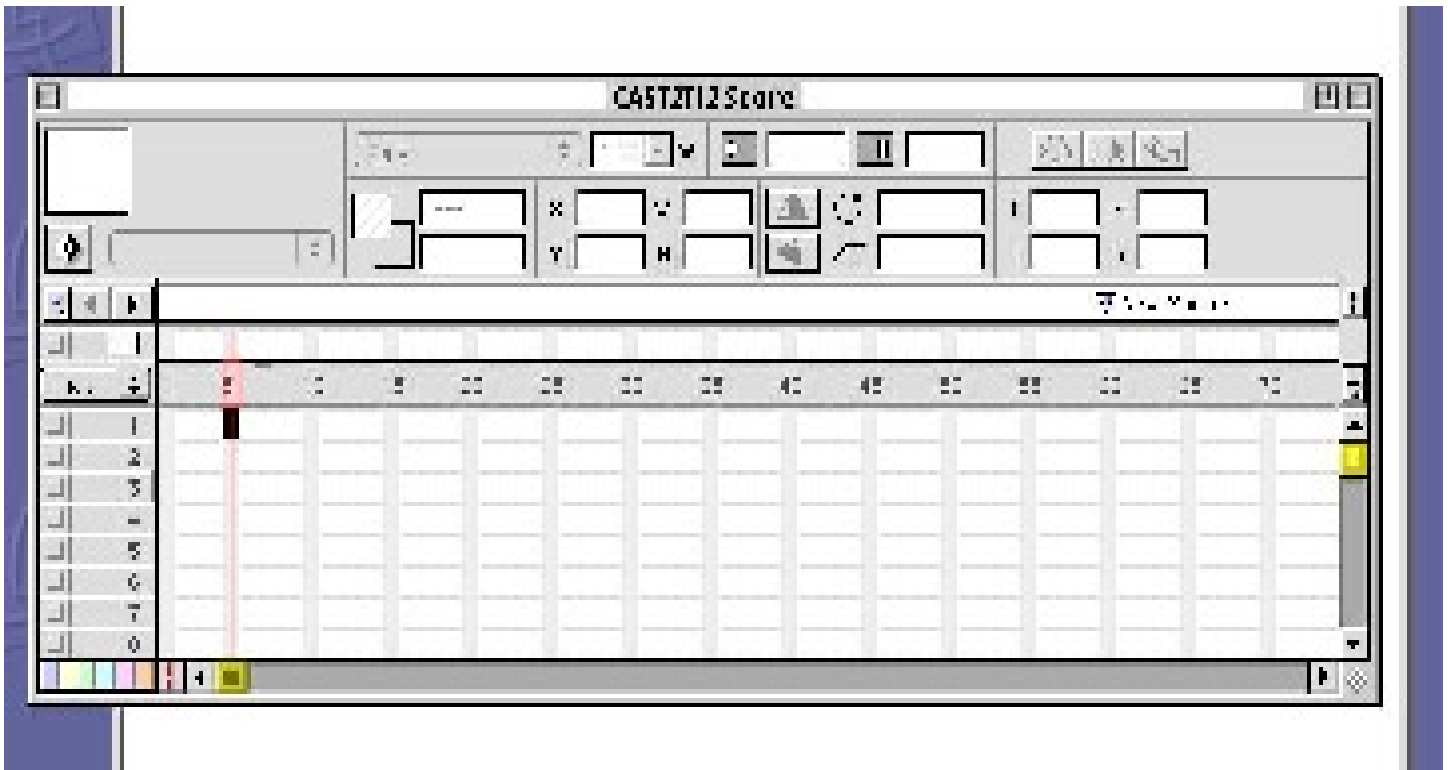
2) Open the cast window
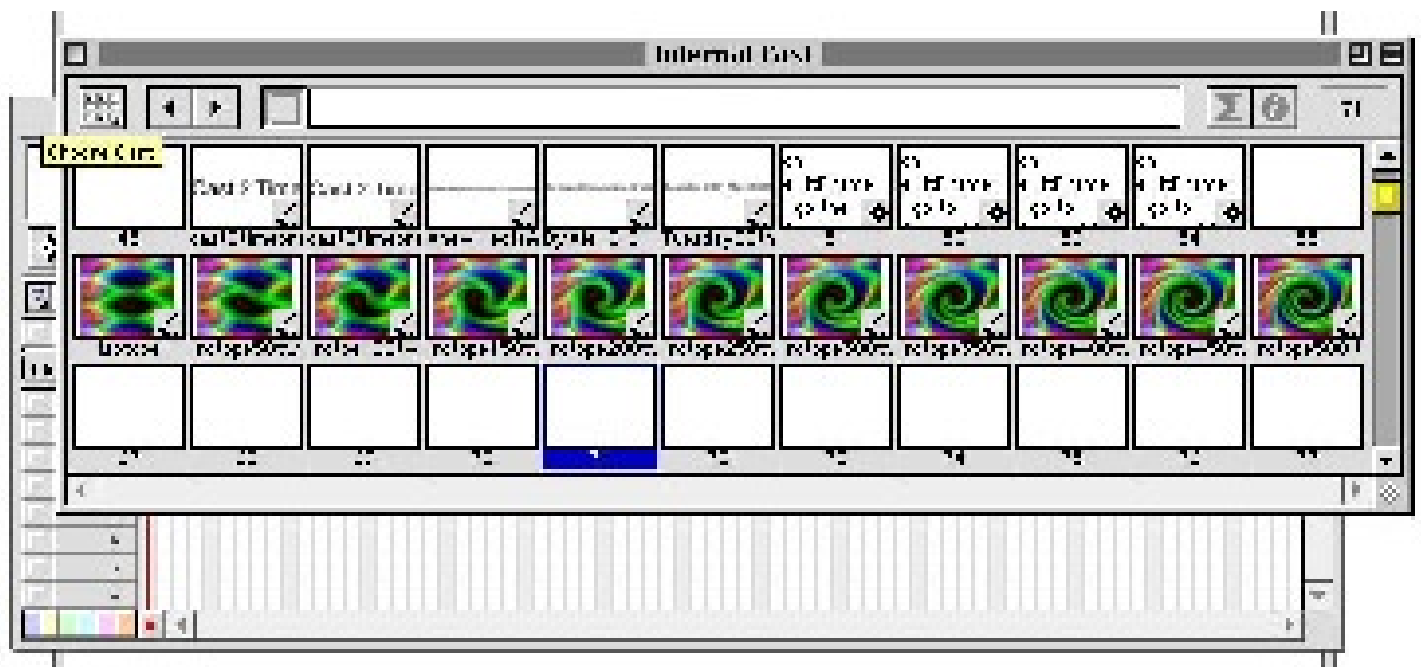
3) Select the required series of cast members

4) Hold down the Alt key (Pc users) or Option key (Mac users) and drag the selected cast members to the score or stage