

Camtasia 3.0

Review by Alan Baker

• Product Information

Name: Camtasiaä 3.0

Manufacturer: TechSmith www.techsmith.com

Cost: \$149.95 from TechSmith web site: www.techsmith.com

CDW: \$125.15 \$94.99 plus shipping from **Programmers Paradise**

<http://www.programmersparadise.com/index.pasp>

\$129.95 from **Micro Warehouse** <http://www2.warehouse.com>

Trial: 30 days if downloaded from **TechSmith**

• What is Camtasiaä

Camtasia is a PC screen recorder and playback suite of applications. A typical use would be to create an instructional "video" of the use of a software application. You can add special effects and sound to this and then publish it on a CD with a **Camtasia Viewer** application that will allow others, without the full Camtasia software to view the "video".

There are two main components of **Camtasiaä 3.0**:

Camtasia Recorder -- the application that you use to capture screen activity, including mouse moves, clicks, screen changes, etc. This is also the application that allows you to add a narrative sound track and some special effects..

Camtasia Producer -- the application that you would use to take one or more of these video clips and put them together into a full-fleged video, with titles, screen transitions, etc. It also is the tool you would use to package this edited video for distribution, for example, as a self-executing Windows .exe file.

• Requirements

- Microsoft Windows 95 OSR2, 98, Me, NT 4.0, 2000, XP or later version
- 90 MHz processor (400 MHz recommended)
- 16 MB RAM (64 MB recommended)
- Windows-compatible sound card and microphone (recommended)
- 12 MB of hard-disk space for program installation

• Installation

Installation utilizes a standard windows type installation with typical choices. There are some choices of which components and which image translation (CODEC) you want to install that it would be worthwhile to investigate first before the installation. Unfortunately, there wasn't anything in the readme.txt file about these choices. However, once you see them and make choices, you can always go back and reinstall, making different choices. I chose to also install the tutorial/samples and this seemed to take 3-4 of the 6 minutes of the installation. My programs directory had 6.5 MB of new files after the installation, including the sample .avi files. The installation took about 6 minutes on my machine, and did not indicate a need to reboot. I typically do reboot after every installation anyway.

At the end of the installation, there was another option presented – do you want to install a program called **DublIt**? This was the first indication of this item, and I chose to install this slide-show tool for fixed images. That installation used the **Wise** installation tool which is very commonly seen with free- and share-ware software today. If you don't already have a slide show producing program that allows you to add a sound track, you may as well install **DublIt** and play with it.

Also a part of the installation was the **Camtasia Player** tool which will play digital video files like .avi fomats, whether or not they are created with Camtasia. This player will, however, play files created with Camtasia and using their proprietary file translation code (CODEC). Windows Media player probably won't play files created with the Camtasia CODEC. The rest of the Camtasia suite uses this viewer to show you what you have recorded / produced.

- **Features**

Camtasia Recorder

The Recorder user interface is relatively simple and uses the “VCR” style buttons for record, pause, stop, etc.

It looks like this.



The ‘Capture’ menu item has several options:

You can define the area of the desktop Camtasia will record. The four options are:

- **Screen** captures the entire computer desktop area.

- **Window** changes the cursor to a finger used to point to the window to be captured.
- **Region** changes the cursor to a crosshair pointer to define a region of your desktop.
- **Fixed Region** sets a specific region in pixels.
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You can tell **Camtasia** where to send the images you are capturing with the Recorder.

- **File** saves your screen recording to an industry standard AVI file. The AVI files you create with Camtasia can be imported, edited, etc. in any third party application that supports the AVI format.
- **Live** takes advantage of Camtasia's advanced *Live Output feature*. Rather than saving your screen capture video to a file, you can send what you capture, as you're capturing it, in real-time -- literally sending out a live broadcast of desktop activity.
- With the **Single Frame** option clicked, you can capture one frame at a time, using the record button like a camera shutter button to capture frame-by-frame. .
- If you select the **Quick Capture** option, it will speed up the frame rate for the pointer, making cursor movements less choppy on slower systems.

The **View Menu** selections let you make choices of viewing options and this is where you access the Most Recently Used files. Viewing options include three "sizes" of the recorder application window and four different tool bars that can be added to the user interface. In the View menu, you also have access to the Screen Pad applet, which adds floating annotations such as graphic shapes and images like arrows, callout boxes and logos to emphasize specific areas to your recordings.

The **Effects Menu** includes options for

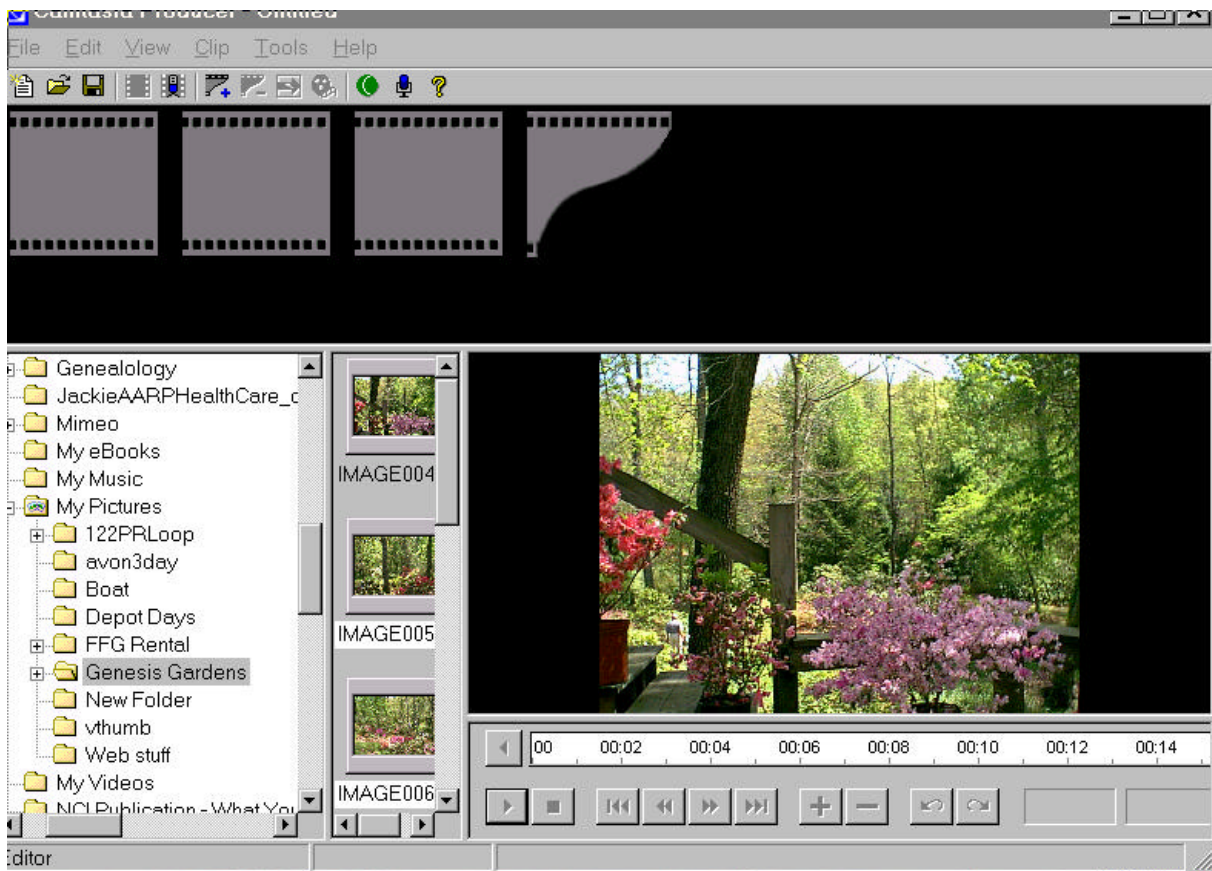
- **Annotation** – add dates and times / captions / watermarks to the recorded images
- **Audio** – record sounds from microphone and audio card / add simulated key click sounds / add simulated keyboard sounds
- **Cursor effects** – Hide/show cursor. Highlight cursor or clicks or both
- **Zoom and Pan effects** – zoom to a set of %'s / auto zoom or auto pan effects as windows change on screen
- **Settings** – various settings ("preferences") for recording

Camtasia Producer

This application takes separate fixed images and / or 'video' images and splices them together into a complete video. It is the tool used to add titles, screen transitions and other effects that turn the simple image collection into a useable video show.

The user interface is more complicated than the Recorder, but looks like many image viewer applications. The user interface in its standard form looks like this:

The Camtasia Producer user interface



The window has four basic frames. The lower, left hand frame is a typical Explorer file tree view which is used to browse to the desired image files. Above, I have selected a folder "Genesis Gardens" in the My Pictures folder. Selecting this caused thumbnail images to appear to the right of that file tree. When I select one of the image thumbnails, a larger view is shown in the lower right frame, as shown above. This is called the **Editor** window. There is a time line slider control in the Editor frame and several "VCR" type buttons to move through the video clip file selected. You can view individual frames of the file and for example delete a selected frame or save an individual frame as a "still" picture. The upper frame in the window is called the **Storyboard**.

The Storyboard frame shows the various video clips that have been selected and in the order that they will be spliced together for the overall video that you are now editing and getting ready to produce. You can include still shots and transition effects between the video clips.

You can save your work as a Project File (like some programming language applications do) or as a new movie. To create a new video from the storyboard, choose **Produce Movie** from the file menu. Camtasia Producer creates standard AVI files, Microsoft ASF, Microsoft WMV, RealMedia and Apple QuickTime streaming video files, Camtasia for Real Player Plug-In videos, or animated GIFs.

Don't panic, here, for the TechSmith folks provide a wizard applet that walks you through all of the possible options for customizing your movie, including watermarking, frame size, compression and copyright information and then prompts you to save the video.

Also using the Camtasia Producer application, you can take a video file that you created and use the **Pack and Show** tool to package your movie and the **TSCC codec** and/or **Camtasia Player** as a Windows-executable file (.exe). When users receive the .exe file, they simply double-click it to unpack it, install TSCC and/or Camtasia Player, and show the movie.

- **So . . . did it actually work??**

Yes!! I started with some .avi files that I already had and put them into the Producer program, added some fixed image files and some transitions, then saved as a new movie file. This took about 2 minutes and I had my first movie!! Later, I read the Getting Started booklet and browsed the help file. Although I chose to download the tutorial, I forgot to use it at first. My second project was to create a single .avi file of various screen activities including searching on the web. It also worked. I haven't gotten to the point of learning about the various CODECs and trying to make my movies the best that they can be. I was trying to figure out what to actually do with this software at home, and found that making a slide show of digital photo files and then using **Pack and Show** to make a self-executable file for distribution to others was great!! Next time I will figure out the audio stuff and add a digitized sound track to my digital picture album. I can also see how the PPCUG program committee can use this excellent software for the classes and perhaps some parts of our meeting presentations.

- **Documentation**

There is a 16-page *Getting Started Guide* booklet in the standard package. Like many PC folks, I chose to ignore it and just install the software and use the help files to get started. Since then, however, I have read this booklet and recommend that you take the time to at least skim it. The Recorder and Producer application have their own Win 2000-style help files, which seem pretty complete. There was no .pdf file on the CD of a User Guide.

- **Product Support**

They support a bulletin board – Community Forums at <http://www.techsmith.com/products/camtasia/forums>

Tech Support has a FAQ at <http://www.techsmith.com/products/camtasia/toptenfaqs.asp>

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- **Other Information of interest**

While I was checking the CD for this review. I found that also on the CD is the TechSmith screen capture program, **Snagit**. No mention of this anywhere else, but it does install and it works.