



The main Kinemac interface has a main project window is on top and a timeline on the bottom. Mapping a video onto an object is as easy as dragging a thumbnail from the visual browser (on the right) and dropping it onto the object element in the scene.



# Kinemac 1.0

**New 3D animation program lives up to its promise of realtime playback with no rendering.**

REVIEWER: FRANKLIN MCMAHON

A lot of professional video applications promise realtime results, and Kinemac 1.0 for Mac OS X is one of the few that delivers. From a company that's also named Kinemac, it's a 3D program that allows quick and easy compositions with the uncanny ability to play everything back in realtime with no rendering. It harnesses the power of your (necessarily beefy)

OpenGL card to produce stunning results in minutes. The program is laid out cleanly and features a pretty soft learning curve, so anyone from seasoned pros to 3D beginners can jump in and start creating.

Billed as a realtime animation and presentation package, Kinemac might actually seem like a 3D PowerPoint at first glance. And in some respects, you certainly could whip up some fancy documents to dazzle the boardroom (the program even does charts and can import a tabbed text file of database info). But as you dig deeper, you'll realize the software is actually capable of some rather sophisticated animation.

Kinemac starts with a common four-panel view: your animation view and then views such as side, front, and back. You can switch it so you just see your camera view as the main window. To begin animating, add various standard elements such as spheres, boxes, text, and other primitives. You can also load in .obj and .3ds files as well as .svg vector files. The cool thing about using .svg files is that the program can automatically extrude your vector graphic, which is handy for logo work. In addition to 3D text, you can import .rtf text files, and the program can automatically

generate 2D static or scrolling text.

Once you load some objects into Kinemac, the fun begins. Choose parameters such as reflection level; surface attributes (metal, glass, etc.); texture; and color. Even better, you can map a movie file onto any object. The program does a remarkable job of playing your clip on just about any object, from a box to a complex object to a logo.

Setting things in motion is next, and the program has the standard timeline with keyframes. It also sports a complete Bézier curve panel, which allows you to drill down and adjust any frame of any object in your project. Tweak the rotations, fades, acceleration, speed, and size. Much of the standard parameter adjustments reside in the inspector panel, where you have a large number of controls, including anti-alias, setting background images and movies, stage size, animation scripting, object alignment, lights, camera lenses, camera tracking, and object targeting. The inspector also features a full file browser, so bringing in graphics and video is as easy as drag and drop.





**Kinemac's Bézier curves editor provides exact keyframe tweaking of every element in the scene, from the objects to the camera.**

## bottomline

**Company:** Kinemac  
[www.kinemac.com](http://www.kinemac.com)

**Product:** Kinemac 1.0

**Assets:** Plays video back in realtime with no rendering, capable of sophisticated animation, can map movie file onto any object, bringing in graphics and video is drag-and-drop easy.

**Caveats:** Lack of automatic keyframing, Bézier panel opens as a separate window.

**Demographic:** Professional 3D video animators.

**PRICE: \$299**

Animations can be nested and grouped, which allows for very complex maneuvers.

Did I mention all this happens in realtime? That term is thrown around a lot. You might think of similar animation programs such as Apple Motion, which is realtime—up to a point. Once you get complex with a project in Motion, you then have to start rendering.

Kinemac keeps things light and spry, using tricks like image maps for reflections as opposed to techniques such as raytracing. That way the program keeps everything playing in realtime even as your scene increases in complexity. Once you get your scene how you like it, you simply export a QuickTime file, and even that happens very fast.

I have already used Kinemac on client projects, exporting out to the Apple ProRes 422 format for beautiful anti-aliased HD results. One recent project required some tracking of objects to specific paths, as well as some complex camera moves. Kinemac has many tracking options, including the ability to simply draw a path with the pen tool and then set the camera to track along on the path. So I was able

to mock up several test runs in a fraction of the usual time before heading into actual production. The client for that project wanted some substantial changes after I'd completed it. If this had been another 3D program that I typically use (such as Autodesk 3ds Max or Maxon Cinema 4D), the redo would have been fairly time-intensive. With Kinemac, it was remarkably easy. The requirements for the realtime goodness are fairly specific. You can run the program on anything from a G4 to a G5 to Mac Pro (the processor is not that essential); however, a powerful video card is necessary. The company's website has a list of supported ATI and Nvidia cards.

One thing I did not like about the program is certain aspects of the keyframing. First, there's a lack of automatic keyframing, and the method by which keyframing is implemented is not ideal. With most 3D programs, you set up your object, create a keyframe, click further down the timeline, move the object or camera around, and set another keyframe. With Kinemac, it's the opposite. You actually move down the timeline, set a keyframe, and then move your objects. If you've never used a 3D program before and followed Kinemac's manual, you'll be fine. But if, like me, you've been using all sorts of 3D programs for years, it will cause some initial frustration and hunting through the instructions before you settle into the rhythm of how Kinemac works. Ideally, some sort of auto-keyframing option should be included, which would add even more speed to initial mockups and previz work. Another annoyance is that the Bézier panel opens up as a separate window, which makes it feel very disconnected from the rest of the program.

I often say download the demo, but this time, I really mean it. Grab the demo and then download several of the free example project files from the Kinemac website, load them, and play them. Prepare to be dazzled by the smooth, professional, complex animation all playing back in realtime. Then drill into some of the layers, make some tweaks, and play around. It won't take long to realize that Kinemac is a very powerful 3D animation program at a great price that can pay for itself almost immediately. The only drawback? You might not be able to go back to regular 3D rendering ever again. □

