iShowU
when words alone are not enough

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Introduction

Welcome to the iShowU manual. iShowU allows capture of video and audio from your screen into a QuickTime movie, in real-time. It allows you a significant amount of control over the final movie using an interface that doesn't get in your way.

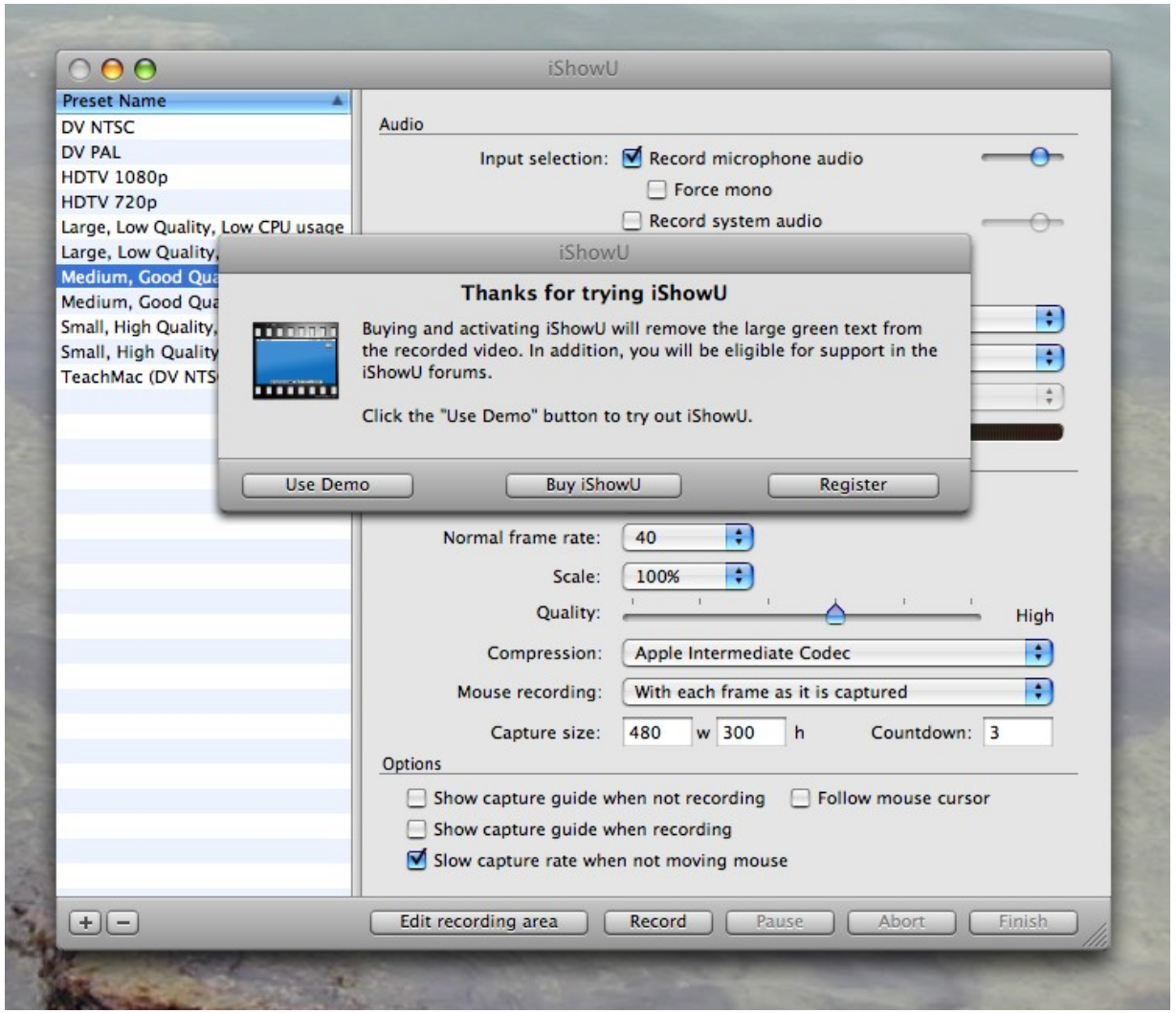
This manual is designed to both describe the interface and explain certain things that may not be obvious at first glance. You don't need to read it right though, rather you can use it like you would any other reference manual and skip to the section that most interests you. It begins describing the things that an average user will see first, followed by more complex options or concepts.

If you're new to iShowU, we at shinywhitebox hope you find this manual (and iShowU itself!) a useful resource and look forward to seeing you as a customer soon[1].

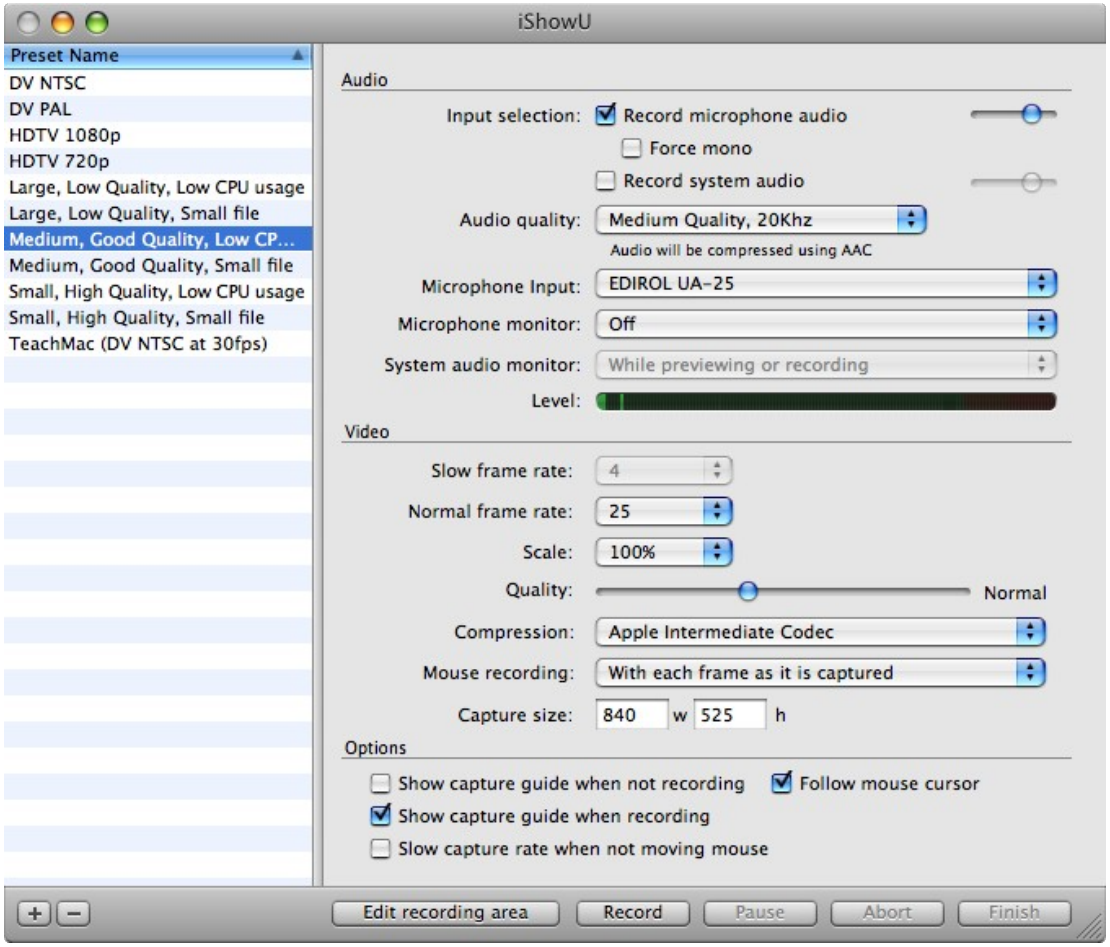
1 That is of course, assuming you haven't simply loaded this manual so that you can print it out and burn it. We figure that if you're doing that, you're probably not in the right frame of mind to become a customer right now.

First time usage

The first time you load iShowU you will see both the 'Demo' dialog and the main window.



Go ahead and click on the **Use Demo** button in order to begin playing around with iShowU. The rest of the manual assumes that iShowU looks like this:



Registration

This topic is covered here because it is the first thing you're going to want to do after buying iShowU.

As of version 1.79 (about August 2010) manual registration was removed. The instructions are still provided below in case you're using a previous version.

For recent versions of iShowU we suggest internet activation. Actually, it's the only option. Just enter email address and password you used when purchasing at the shinywhitbox site, and the software will contact our servers to register itself.

For previous versions

Either click the Register button on the dialog you see when you first start the app, or choose “Register ...” from the application menu.

Registering will turn off the green text that is present on the demo videos produced by iShowU. When you purchased you will have received an email containing the following details:

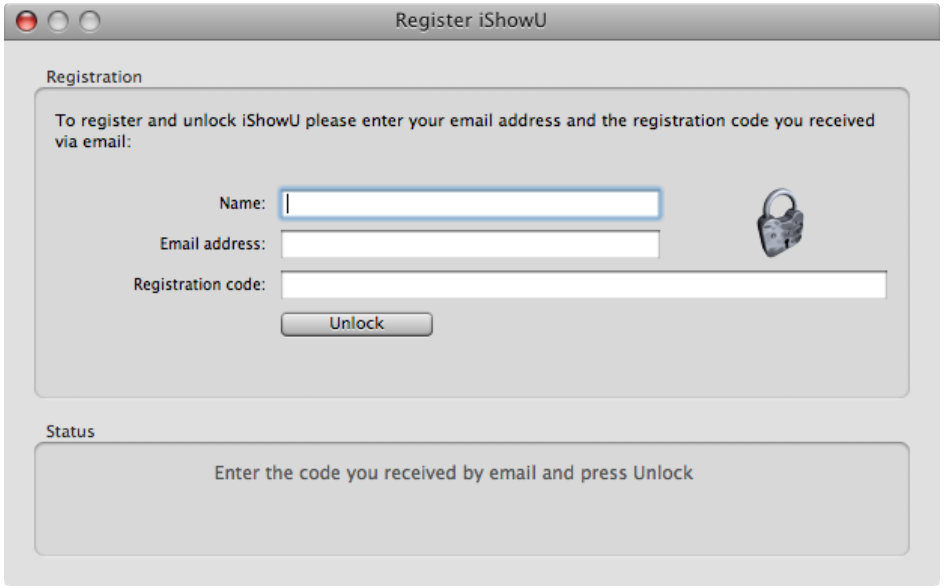
- Your name
- The email address you used when purchasing
- A registration code (a big long series of numbers and letters)

To register you need to enter these details into the appropriate fields on the registration screen (this will be shown on the next page) **exactly** as they appear in the email. Case isn't important (Neil is the same as nEiL), but the words must match exactly. i.e: Neil Clayton isn't the same as N Clayton.

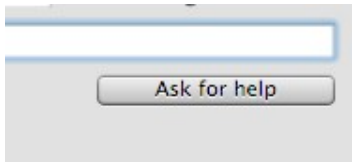
If you do not have these details, please contact shinywhitebox support at support@shinywhitebox.com. You won't be able to register the product without them.

The Registration Dialog

1) With your registration details in hand, you can unlock by simply filling in each field and pressing the Unlock button.



2) If registration fails – you'll see another button appear to the right of the unlock button called “Ask for Help”. If you press this iShowU will send some debugging information to SWB including your name, email address and what you've typed in. This will help us help you, and is the recommended way of solving all registration issues.



3) You'll then be asked if you want to install for “Just this user”, or for “All users”. Installing for “Just this user” means that only you will be able to run iShowU on this machine. Other users will still get the green text on their videos. Choosing “All users” on the other hand will make it so that all users on the machine can use iShowU (this requires Administrator rights)

That's it! You're done!

Remember that if you have a problem you should press the Ask for Help button. It's worth noting that the response to this won't be instant as it results in an email being sent to support@shinywhitebox (without you have to type lots of technical debugging information) and at the time of writing SWB support is running from New Zealand. We might be asleep when you press the button!

Your first movie

Before we dive into the many options available to you – let's create a movie to make sure that iShowU is doing what it should on your machine.

1. Make sure that the Medium, Low CPU usage preset is selected like the picture on the right.
2. Enable the “Show capture guide when not recording” and you should see a black rectangle following the mouse. This is known as the Capture Rectangle, and it represents the video being created.
3. Now click the **Record** button down below.

Move the mouse around for about 10-20s and then press the **Finish** button. After a very brief pause you should see a screen capture video loaded into Quicktime. That's it!

My first recording didn't work, what do I do?

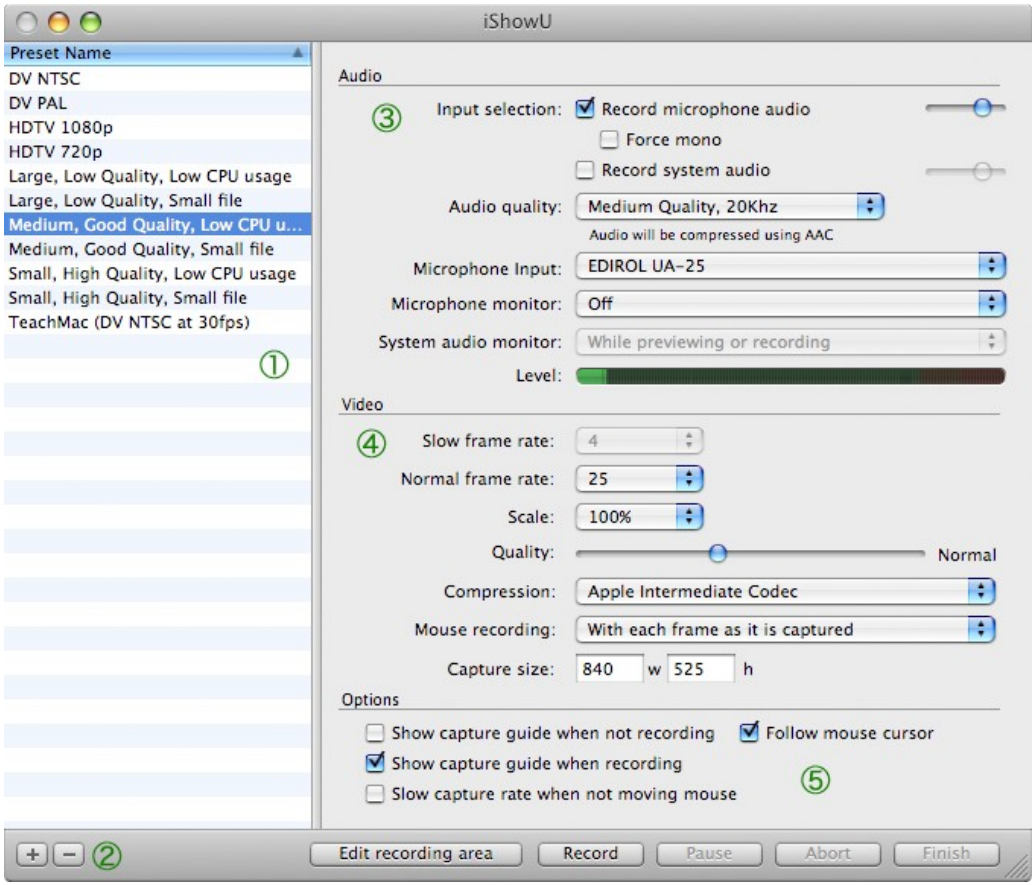
If none of the above worked for you, it's important that you get in touch with shinywhitebox support, both so that you can evaluate the software correctly and so that we at shinywhitebox can make it a better tool for everyone.

You can contact shinywhitebox on the forums (http://forums.shinywhitebox.com) or via email using support@shinywhitebox.com . The former method (the forums) is preferred as then everyone learns from problems that arise.

Presets

Although the screen may look complicated at first glance you'll soon recognise that the options are grouped together by function to help you find or change what you want. The decision to place all of the options on a single screen is intentional. We want to provide a system that allows you to see everything about your preset at a glance.

Presets are central to iShowU – they group together almost every setting relating to a screen video, and make it easy for you to switch from one type of video to the other. For example, you'd use a different preset when creating a video for an iPod than you would if you were going to be putting a video onto a DVD.



Lets briefly describe the main parts of the user interface:

1. These are your presets. iShowU will create a sample set for you when you start it for the first time. Click on a preset to see it's details, which are shown on the right hand side of the interface
2. You can add and remove presets using these buttons
3. **Audio options** - Here, you can change the overall quality of the recorded audio. You can also choose an audio source. Just below the audio source drop down, is an input level meter. You can use this to monitor the audio input level - that is, you can eyeball it to see that audio is working.
4. **Video options** - Here you can choose the video frame rate (how fast frames are captured), and the quality of the compression. You can also choose the type of compression used (which will default to H264 or Apple Intermediate).
5. **Other options** – Options that don't fit cleanly into either Audio or Video are here.

Audio Options

iShowU can record input from a microphone and input from the system. This means that iShowU allows you to record two channels of audio at once. This is also why you will see two small sliders on the right hand side of the audio section – they are the mixers for each of the channels.

- **Input Selection:** You can enable microphone of system audio recording simply by clicking on the relevant checkbox. The volume mixing sliders control both the volume of the audio that you hear, and also the volume of audio relative to the other channel when recording starts. So if you want to record some backing music you can have something playing and then turn down the volume using the slider to the right of **Record system audio**. The **Mono source** option will play the audio in the "centre" channel, thus making it sound more balanced.
- **Audio Quality:** This changes the audio quality for both channels. Lower quality audio takes up less space in the final movie. The low quality audio is recorded at about 8khz, medium at 22.1khz and high at 44.1khz.
- **Microphone monitor:** You can use this to monitor the audio being recorded through the microphone. Keep in mind that if you're using a laptop, the microphone will be very close to the speakers so it's likely that you'll create a feedback loop. Normal practice would be to monitor the mix using headphones which will prevent the feedback loop (and also allow you hear more clearly)
- **Micrphone Input:** Use this to choose the input source for your microphone. This list will contain different entries depending upon what hardware is plugged into your computer. Note that this list will show only **input** devices, like microphones. It won't (and isn't intended) to show things like Applications, or devices like speakers etc.
- **System Audio Monitor:** Like the microphone monitor, but it monitors the system audio output (that is, all of the sound coming from the system). You can use this to hear what is being played through the system. If you're recording system audio, it's normal to have this on. One case where you might not want this is if you're playing something quite loud and you're also recording via the microphone; you will probably end up recording the system output twice – once via the microphone and once in the system output channel. In this case, you should probably use headphones (just like for the microphone monitor) or turn down the volume.

Finally, the level meter acts similar to one that you might find on your stereo. It shows the peak and average volume levels being put through the iShowU audio system.

Capturing System Audio (aka: Soundflower)

The first time that you attempt to record system audio, you may be prompted to install something called Soundflower. You don't really have to do much apart from click the **Install** button and enter your password. This section outlines why it's needed and how it all works – it can be safely skipped if you're not interested.

Unfortunately, there is no easy/official way by which sound coming out of your Mac can be recorded. This is by design. iShowU 'works around' this using Soundflower – which is kind of like a pipe. You can play audio **into** the soundflower, and have it come out the other end. It's then quite simple to attach to the other end of the pipe and record it as though it was another microphone.

Note: You can uninstall Soundflower using iShowU. Simply go to the iShowU menu and choose the Uninstall Soundflower... option.

Here's what is happening when you click on the 'record system output', behind the scenes:

1. iShowU makes the Soundflower (2ch) the default output device. You can see this by going into System Preferences and looking at the Sound (output device) panel. This means that all system audio is being pumped into the Soundflower (2ch) device.
2. We then 'pump sound' from the **other end** of the Soundflower (2ch), back to whatever device you had chosen as your default output device previously. We do this so that you can hear something. If you've inquisitive you can play with this yourself, you'll find that when playing music to the Soundflower that you don't hear anything. This is because the audio is going to the soundflower itself (which then just ends up on the other end of the pipe) and not your speakers.
3. iShowU then records a second channel of audio, using the Soundflower (2ch) **input** device.
4. When you turn off the **record system audio** option, iShowU stops pumping sound and switches the default system device back to what it was.

Tips for Record System Audio / Soundflower

Unfortunately, this is not a perfect solution because not all other applications realize what is being done in the background by iShowU. If you're having problems, please look at the following list to see if it's any use:

1. Other applications need to be aware that the default system audio output might change (iShowU changes it when you click on the record system audio option). If they do not detect this, then they will continue to play audio to your speakers, and not to iShowU. An example is VLC / Skype.
2. Soundflower has no volume controls. This means that the Volume up/down controls on the Mac keyboard don't do anything when it's selected. This is not a bug in iShowU or Soundflower – it's just the way that soundflower works.

Video Options

- **Slow frame rate** – The capture rate when **slow capture rate when not moving mouse** mode is enabled. When the mouse stops moving, and the capture rectangle catches up to it – the video will be captured at this rate (not the normal rate). Note that if you have this option enabled and the **follow mouse cursor** option is disabled then the video will be captured at this rate.
- **Normal frame rate** – The rate at which video will **attempt** to be captured, in frames per second (fps). The real rate at which video is written to disk is dependent upon both the size of the capture area, and the codec being used to compress the video. As an example, if you specify 30fps with a capture size of 1400x900, and the H264 codec, you are unlikely to get 30fps. The H264 codec is extremely CPU intensive. A more realistic rate is about 5fps. The **29.97** option enables you to perform a capture at exactly 29.97 frames per second which is useful to some Final Cut Pro users.

  Note that you can measure the effective capture rate using the option in Preferences, **show actual fps in status bar.** This will show two numbers, the top being the speed of the frame grabber (the part of iShowU that gets frames to be encoded in the video) and the lower number is the actual speed that the frames are inserted into the QuickTime video. The lower number includes time to compress and save the video to disk.
- **Quality** – This changes the visual quality of the video. A lower visual quality takes up less space on disk.
- **Scale** – Changes the final output size of the movie to be 100%, 75% or 50% of the original capture size. Please note that 75% and 50% scaling take some CPU resource. In fact, if you're capturing full screen – you'll get a faster rate using a 100% capture size (no scaling) than if you scale at all. The last option is "Custom..." - clicking this will let you type in a custom (just to the right) capture size.
- **Compression** – This is the type of codec to use when compressing video frames. The two most useful are Apple Intermediate and H264. The former is very fast but yields a larger video file than it's H264 counterpart. While H264 produces small files, it's *considerably* more CPU intensive; and as a result the maximum frame rate achievable is lower.
- **Capture size** – Although you can edit the capture size visually (see the Edit menu), you can also type in an exact size here. This is useful if you don't want to 'fiddle about' getting the size right using the mouse.
- **Mouse recording** – iShowU provides two ways by which you can record the mouse. The first, **With each frame as it is captured** will copy a picture of the cursor onto each video frame as it's captured. This produces a very clean representation of the mouse. The mode Separately **, in a Sprite track** will record the mouse in a completely separate track in the QuickTime movie. It has the advantage that the frame rate and mouse movement can be at separate rates. This means that even if the video rate is down to say 5 or 6 fps, the mouse will still be smooth. The one disadvantage is that the mouse isn't rendered as cleanly as the first mode.

Video Tips / FAQ

- If you are after a high frame rate, try the following:
    - If you're using a recent machine (such as an Intel), the Apple Animation compressor gives great colour and good performance. Depending on how big the capture area is, and how fast you want to go – you can require quite a fast hard disk for this.
    - If you're on a machine that has less disk bandwidth, such as an older laptop (G4/G5 PowerBook) then Apple Intermediate is a good second choice. It produces a smaller video (so it doesn't need quite as fast a hard drive when recording) but uses slightly more CPU power.
- When recording the mouse using a Sprite track, you may note that the mouse cursor in the final video never changes from a pointer. This is intentional. If you want to record various changes to the mouse cursor, please use the "with each frame as it is captured" option.
- If you're recording the mouse in a Sprite track – be careful. Players other than QuickTime may not render the Sprite track at all, and you may not see the mouse.

Other Options

- **Show capture guide when not recording** – If enabled, the capture guide is shown as long as you're not recording a movie. Think of this as a 'preview' mode.
- **Show capture guide while recording** – If enabled, the guide is shown while recording.
- **Follow mouse cursor** – If enabled, the capture guide will as much as possible be centred around the mouse. It will also glide along behind it when you move the mouse.
- **Slow capture rate when not moving mouse** – When the mouse stops moving, and the capture rectangle catches up to it – the video will be captured at this rate and not the normal rate. This is a reasonable way to dynamically control the frame rate of the movie. The assumption is that if the mouse has stopped that *not too much is going on in the background.* Clearly this is completely dependent upon you, but it's a useful option nevertheless.

Editing the Capture Area

Press the Edit Recording Area button to change the size of the movie that you're going to create. The screen will go darker, and you are shown a see-through box that represents the movie area.

You can move this box around, by clicking on it and dragging the mouse. If you are using the **follow mouse cursor** option, then you're really only setting the *size* of the capture area. If the capture area is static (you're not following the mouse) then you use the **Edit Capture Area** feature to change both the location and the size of the video.

Press the **ENTER** key (either the main one on the keyboard, or the one on the numeric keypad) to accept the capture area. Hit **ESC** to cancel whatever changes you've made here. Notice that there are some shortcuts as well. You can have iShowU setup some standard sized capture areas by using Apple-1 through 4. Kind of like QuickTime.

Press the **SPACE** key to enter "hover" mode. In this mode, you can choose the capture area by moving the mouse over anything you see on the screen. The capture area will then conform the object size. It's a very fast way of choosing a capture size for things like applications.

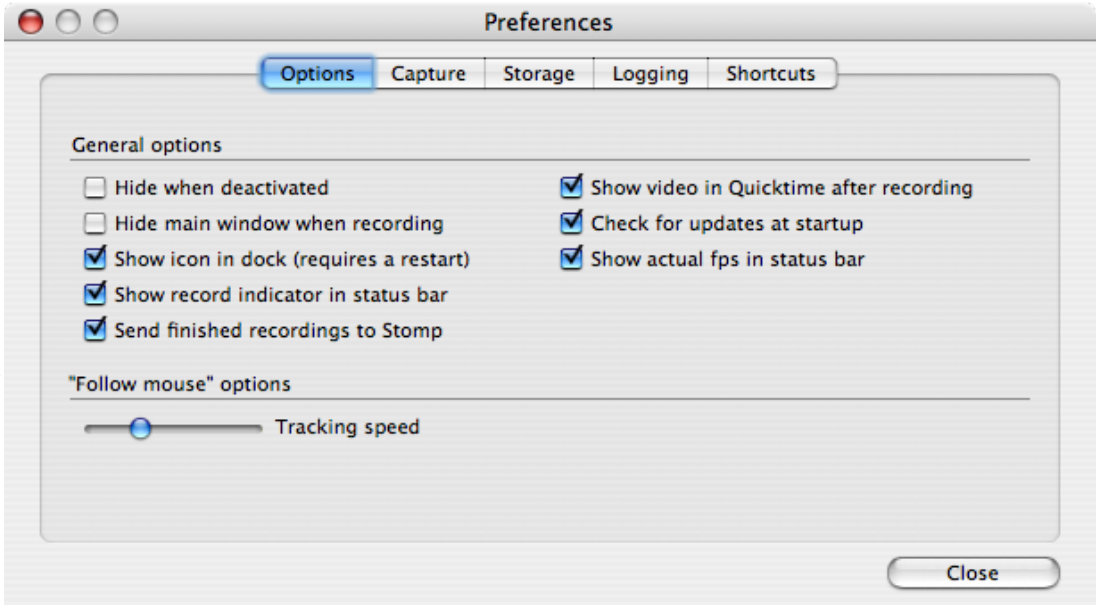
Resetting the Presets

You can choose to erase and recreate all the presets. If you want to do this, there is an action under the edit menu called **Reset Presets ...** . This will first prompt you if you really want to continue before it takes any action. If you choose **Yes**, then the presets will be reset to their factory defaults (the same defaults that you were prompted for the very first time you started iShowU).

Preferences

The preferences section contains all the settings not directly related to a preset. This screen is split into a number of different tabs so that related options are grouped together and easier to comprehend.

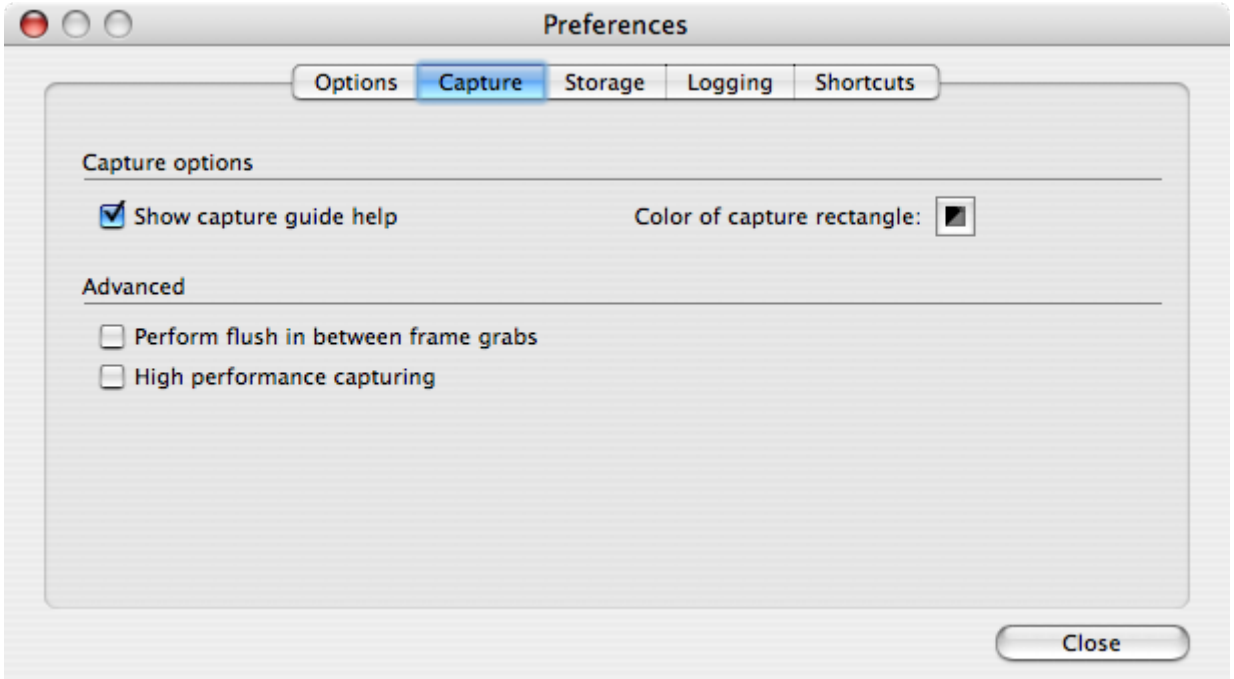
General options



- **Hide when deactivated** - When you click away from iShowU (for example, on some other app), iShowU will disappear. Handy if you don't want it in your face while you're recording.
- **Hide main window when recording** – When you begin recording, iShowU will hide itself. When recording is stopped iShowU will show itself again.
- **Show icon in dock** – Just like a normal application, iShowU has an icon in the dock, and a menu bar at the top of the screen. If you ***disable*** this option, both the icon and the menu bar will be removed next time you restart. You can use the icon in the status bar to start/stop recordings and access preferences.
- **Show record indicator in status bar** – Shows a small icon at the top of the screen (status bar) that you can use to control iShowU.
- **Show actual fps in status bar** – Shows the target and actual frames per second during recording. If the actual value (the lower of the two) is far below the target then the text begins to go quite red. It may also mean you're running out of CPU power for your recording.
- **Check for updates at startup** - if enabled iShowU will check to see if updates are available when you start it. You can always manually perform this check by choosing 'Software Update ...' from the iShowU Menu.
- **Send finished recordings to Stomp** – Stomp is shinywhiteboxs' video recompressor, which we recommend if you want to capture high frame rate movies in iShowU, and then later recompress them to be smaller for the web – or export to the iPod. Enabling this option will feed completed movies to Stomp so that you can compress them at your leisure later.

Capture area options

- **Show capture guide help** – If enabled, some text is placed on every screen when you enter the **Edit Capture Area** to assist you in setting up capture rectangles. This is enabled by default.
- **Color of capture rectangle** – Allows you to change the colour of the capture rectangle. The capture rectangle is only shown if one of the **Show capture guide ...** options is enabled.
- **Perform flush between frame grabs** – this makes iShowU send a 'flush' command to OpenGL for every frame it captures. It's more efficient to turn this option off – but it can help with some graphics cards if the default mode doesn't work for you.
- **High performance capturing** – If enabled; iShowU will use an alternative method to capture frames which can result in a 4-5fps gain depending on the machine and it's graphics card.



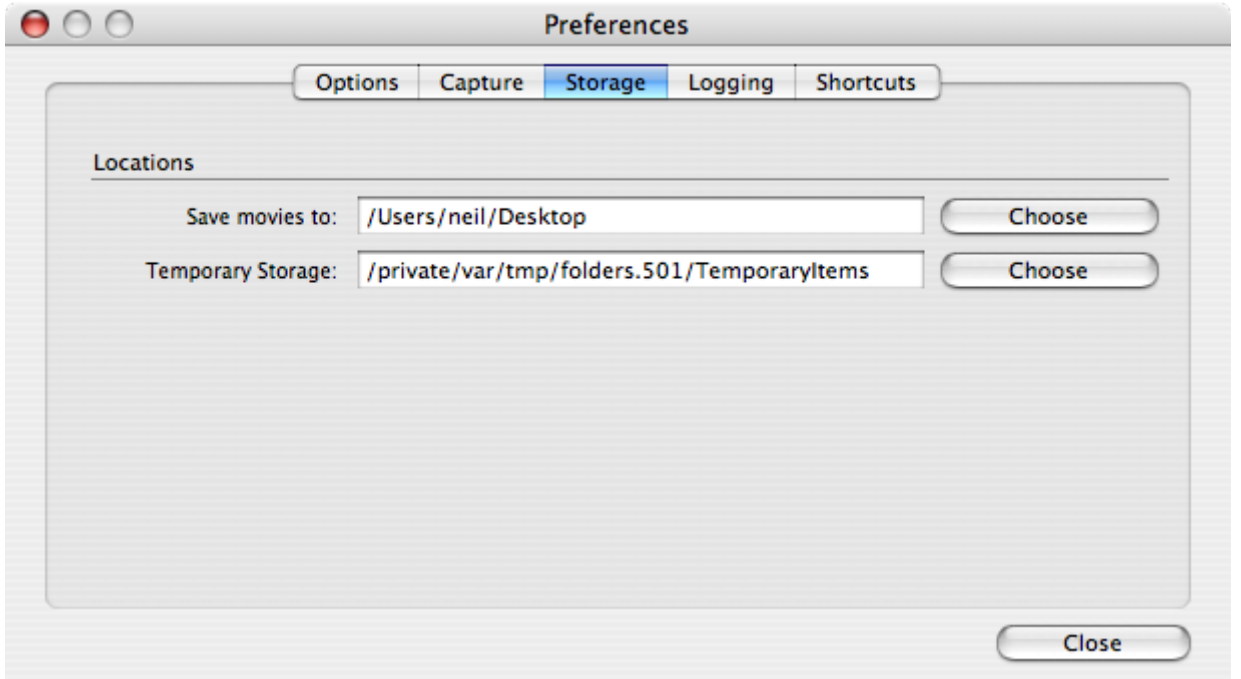
While it's faster (as tested on the recent Intel machines) we have observed some issues with GMA950 graphics cards (the type found in the MacBook machines around 2007 [2]) when hooked up to dual monitors. If you're using a MacBook and just a single screen it's fine. MacPros are also fine (from what we've tested here). It's safe to enable. If it works then it is fine for you to use.

To test: Enable the option and record a video that spans both monitors. You should enable mouse movement and move the mouse over each monitor, gliding over the split as you go. If the video comes out alright then it's fine to enable this option on your computer.

2 Written in Ocrober 2007

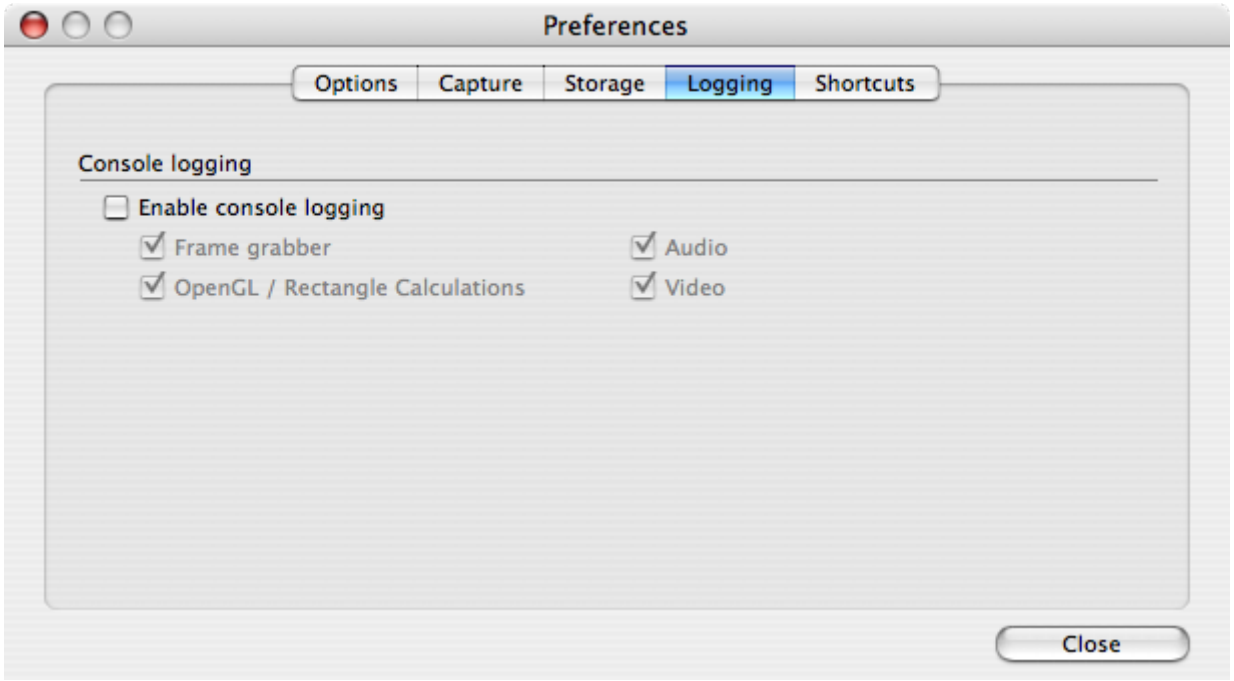
Storage

- **Save movies to** – This is the final location that your movies will be moved to, once they are completed.
- **Temporary Storage** – This is a the place that iShowU creates it's temporary files while it's creating your movie. This doesn't have to be the same place as your 'Save movies to' location. If you have some fast secondary storage, you might get a performance gain by putting your temporary files on that volume.



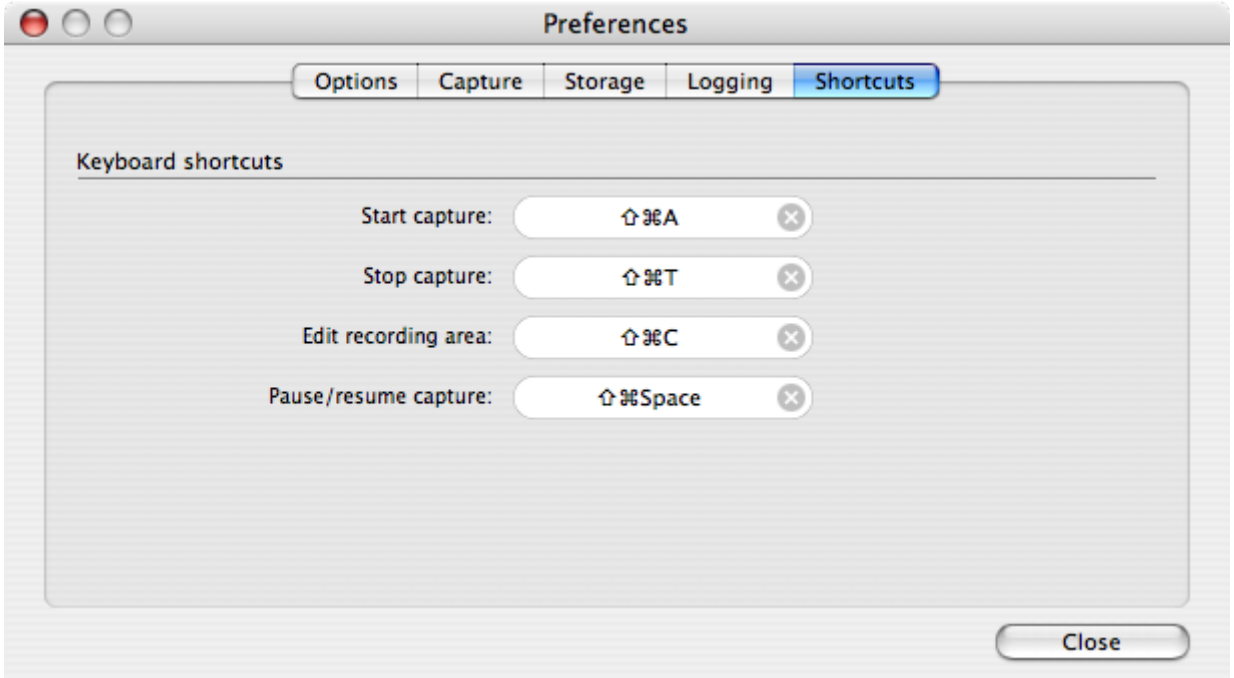
Logging Options

- **Enable console logging -** this is disabled by default. If you're experiencing problems, it's a great idea to turn this on, and then send the resulting log file to the forums for help.
- You can choose to enable only specific parts of the logging system. Click the options for which you want to see logging. Normally this is requested by the support team if they are trying to track down a problem, so they will tell you which options to choose.



Keyboard shortcuts

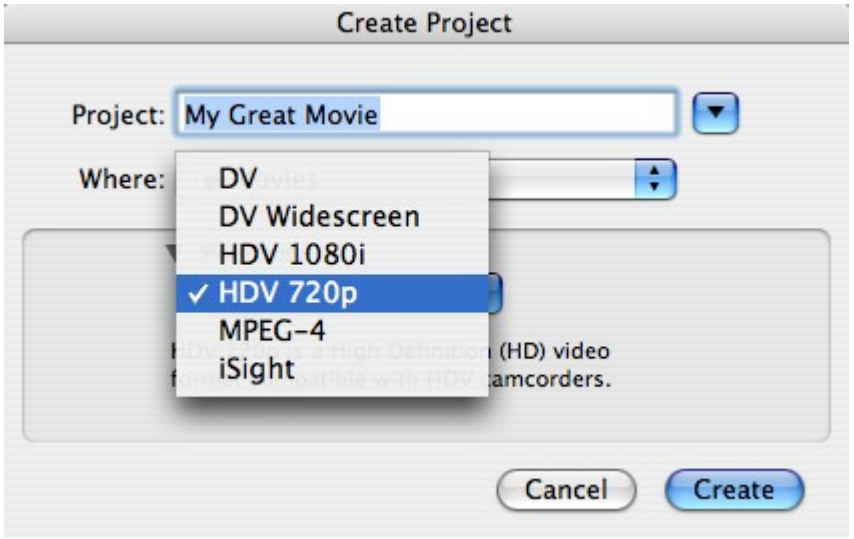
Here you can change the keyboard shortcuts that can be used to start, stop and setup the capture area. To change a shortcut, simply click on the corresponding shortcut oval, to the right of the label, then press the desired key combination that you'd like to use.



Using iShowU with iMovie HD

A few people have asked how they might use iShowU with iMovie. If you've tried this yourself chances are that the movie has looked very blurred when imported into iMovie. This small tutorial will explain why and then show you how to get better results.

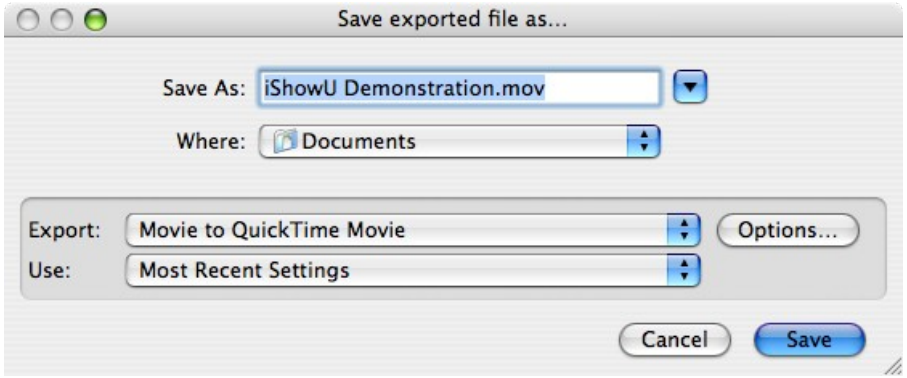
The reason for iMovie's behaviour is that it is restricted to working with 'home movie' resolutions. Here's the list as of iMovie HD:



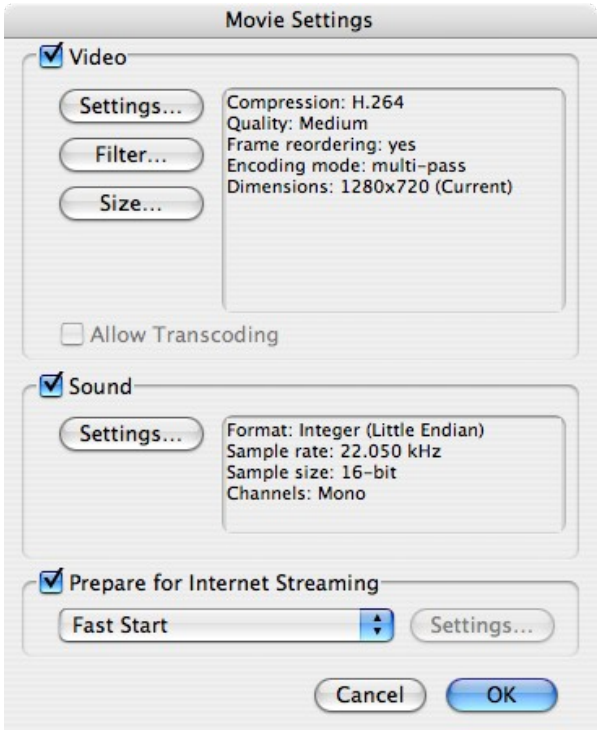
As you can see, the only real options are DV and HDV. Fortunately iShowU provides presets for both of these so let's try it out!

Firstly, select the HDTV 720p preset, and record about 30s of video. When you've done that, drag the created clip into iMovie HD. Now that you've matched iMovies movie size to iShowU, everything now appears much much nicer! Now you can use iMovie to perform fades or other effects.

To save your movie you can choose **Export...** from the file menu. Choose the **Full Quality** setting if you want to save the movie in more or less the same format as you imported it in. In the example shown here, the HD720p preset uses the Apple Intermediate codec, as does iMovie when you choose **Export / Full Quality**.



You can also have iMovie recompress the final product. Again, choose the **Export** option in iMovies File menu, then choose **Expert Settings**, followed by the **Share** button. You can customize the settings by clicking the "Options..." button.



Here's an example showing recompressing using H264.

You can see that I've chosen to compress to the same size (1280x720) and that I'm using H264. I've reduced the sound quality to 22khz.

Click on the **OK** button to perform the compression and save the movie.

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