I started animating in the late 80's with a video camera and VCR, and switched to Anasazi Stopmoti

MonkeyJam was designe pencil testing program for 2D animators, but it has become mu

MonkeyJam's feature set is scaled down enough for the average user and seasoned professional alike, and is free to use by anyone, as long as it is not modified or sold. The interface is an X-sheet driven affair, with separate modules for the camera, rendered preview, and the X-sheet itself, where frames are numbered and can be copied, pasted, and re-ordered to change the timing of the animation.

I have tried every free framegrabbing program for the PC, and MonkeyJam was the most reliable and easiest to set up. One of its only flaws is also a bonus: it saves EVERY FRAME! Those frames will be on your hard drive, numbered in sequence for as long as your hard drive is still working. I didn't think I had animated much with the program until I recently did searches for BMP, PNG, and JPG. MonkeyJam's folder came up with over 100 gigabytes of images I had shot, some from 3 years ago.

With MonkeyJam, you don't have anything in the way of your creativity. You can choose to shoot compressed JPG at 80% compression (this is not adjustable in 3.0), PNG (with a slight lag) or BMP (raw images from the MiniDV camera, webcam (via firewire or USB), or analog video).

There is an audio feature that lets you load and scrub through several formats and hear each frame by dragging down the sidebar, over the waveform that represents what you're hearing. Frame rate is selectable, although the preview in version 3.0 does not appear to play at the correct frame rate. You can compensate for this during playback of the preview, though, and the bug has been mentioned to Mr. Perry for inclusion in a future release. The popular Brickfilms.com uses MonkeyJam almost exclusively and posts short films made with it on a regular basis. They especially like MJ's frame averaging feature, which smooths out grain in captured images.

MonkeyJam is available primarily for Windows, and it will help you build and flex your animation muscles.

Download Monkeyjam **here** .

My monkeys made this: **http://www.youtube.com/prammaven**

Don Carlson
stopmotion animator

Review grade: A+