



# Pinnacle Studio 12

A great entry-level video editing app, but Montage is the only major addition unless you go for the Ultimate edition

By the time software versions reach double digits, you expect an application to be mature. However, with version 10 of Studio, Pinnacle swapped over the underlying render engine, which took a while to bed in. Now we have Pinnacle Studio 12, and previous instabilities have been ironed out. But what else is new?

Pinnacle has divided Studio into multiple pricing levels for some time – you can now get three different bundles. The basic version doesn't do HD, and only supports a single video layer so can't create picture-in-picture or chroma-keying effects. These abilities are added with Studio Plus. The Ultimate bundle consists of Studio Plus 12 alongside premium plug-ins, with a piece of greenscreen material in the box.

If you opt for the basic version, there's only one major new feature: despite the lack of extra video layers, you can now create multi-track effects using the new Pinnacle Montage tool. This provides more than 80 templates divided into 11 themes, with up to six positions for adding clips. The designs blend multiple tracks of video into projects ranging from clips moving across a static background to a complete video wall. Simply drag your footage from the library to the available slots.

However, Pinnacle Montage does have a few rough edges. While you can change the in points of the clips you use by clicking inside each one's Drop Zone icon and dragging left or right, you can't apply filters directly. Instead, each clip must be dragged temporarily onto the



timeline to add the effects, and then dragged back to its Drop Zone. This is rather unintuitive, and you'll need to redo filters from scratch if you don't like how things look back in the composite. But the end results are much more elaborate than most people could achieve with professional software.

The Studio interface was already one of the most intuitive, but Pinnacle has made a few minor tweaks to improve things further. One of the most useful is "Zoom picture to fill frame". We're in a transition period between 4:3 and 16:9 TV, and not every camcorder sticks to the standards either. Right-clicking on a clip on the timeline and selecting the Zoom option eliminates the black boundaries, but it will also crop as necessary, so some of the picture will be lost.

The audio tools have been improved slightly, too. A master control is available in the audio mixer, so you can tweak overall volume rather than having to change each channel individually. You can also enter numerical dB values for volume. A peak-level indicator has been

← The biggest addition to all versions is Pinnacle Montage, which allows for composition of multiple layers of video.

## VIDEO EDITING

### PRICE

£28 (£33 inc VAT); Plus £56 (£66 inc VAT); Ultimate £66 (£77 inc VAT)

### UPGRADE

Plus £43 (£50 inc VAT); Ultimate £60 (£70 inc VAT)

### SUPPLIER

[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

### INTERNET

[www.pinnaclesys.com](http://www.pinnaclesys.com)

← Studio Plus and Ultimate can burn to Blu-ray disc at last, with a choice of encoding formats.

## REQUIREMENTS

2.4GHz processor • 1GB RAM • 2GB hard disk space • DirectX9 graphics and sound card • Windows XP SP2/Vista

added to each channel, as well as the timeline, so you'll be warned of audio issues even when the mixer is closed.

There are 27 new titles and 32 new DVD menus. At the output stage, YouTube has been added as an upload option alongside Yahoo Video. You can export audio on its own, too, in WAV or MP3 format, along with newly added Flash and 3GP video formats. The output renderer now has the ability to pause if it fills up the disk, so you won't have to start again after clearing enough drive space to continue. The output mode can even trigger a sound or shut the system down when it's finished.

The remainder of the new features are focused on the Plus and Ultimate versions. HDV and AVCHD capabilities were added in previous versions, as was the option to burn to HD DVD. Now you can also burn to Blu-ray, with a choice of MPEG2 or AVC encoding.

The Ultimate version has a different bundle to previous incarnations. You still get the Dolby Digital 5.1 encoding plug-in and ProDAD VitaScene; this provides its own interface for applying custom lighting, texture and colour effects. However, BIAS SoundSoap and StageTools Moving Picture have been replaced by Boris Graffiti and Red Giant Software's well-respected Magic Bullet Looks. The latter is another plug-in with its own interface, but here the focus is on replicating the appearance of familiar film and video treatments often seen in film, TV, advertising and music videos. It provides some classy filters. Boris Graffiti offers sophisticated 3D titling, like a mini Adobe After Effects. It offers a huge amount of animation power and a plethora of presets, but Advanced mode will be complicated for the average Studio user.

With the exception of Montage and Blu-ray burning, Pinnacle Studio 12 doesn't add many major core features. It's still a great option for new video editors, and the Plus and Ultimate versions offer a wealth of effects, but Studio's lack of extra video layers remains a disadvantage. An AVCHD-enabled version of Adobe Premiere Elements will steal its thunder, when it eventually arrives. **JAMES MORRIS**

EASE OF USE	★★★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★★☆☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★☆☆
OVERALL	★★★★★☆☆