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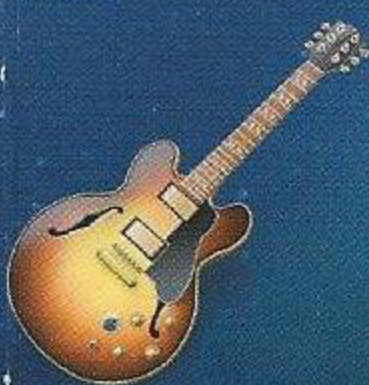
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Use CrazyTalk7 to make cool animations

Creating animations isn't just for the professionals

Difficulty: Intermediate
Time needed: 30 minutes
Available: App Store
Price: £20.99/$29.99

The reality is that very few of us work as professional animators for the likes of Disney and Pixar. As a consequence, people rarely try and create animations either because they feel the process is too complicated, time consuming or artistically difficult. It's a shame, as this view couldn't be further from the truth. Now that there are a number of inexpensive software packages to choose from, it's relatively easy to learn the craft for yourself.

CrazyTalk7 is one of our favourite apps on the market at the moment, due to its sensible user interface, wide selection of pre-generated materials and endless customisation options. When you first fire it up, you'll automatically have access to 11 different characters or 'actors' for you to mould, move and generally play around with.

By and large though, you'll want to be creating your own original works of art to show off to other people. The app allows you to import your own character, both from a piece of line art or a photograph, and then add a wireframe for movement that feels both simple and natural. Throw in your own voice-over track as well as a custom background, and you'll be exporting a brilliant snippet of animation in no time.

This tutorial is focused on showing you the basics first and foremost, such as using automated character movements and dialogue. The second shows you where to begin when implementing your own creations, although there's plenty more to dig into once you start exploring the Timeline, individual frames and phoneme library.

The toolbar
The various controls here can be used to move and rotate your character throughout the animation. The home button is useful in particular if you want to export a clip that can be looped repeatedly

Voice morph
If you're making a comical animation for friends, family or colleagues, look no further. The sliders here can be used to change the pitch of the dialogue, as well as how robotic or echoey it sounds
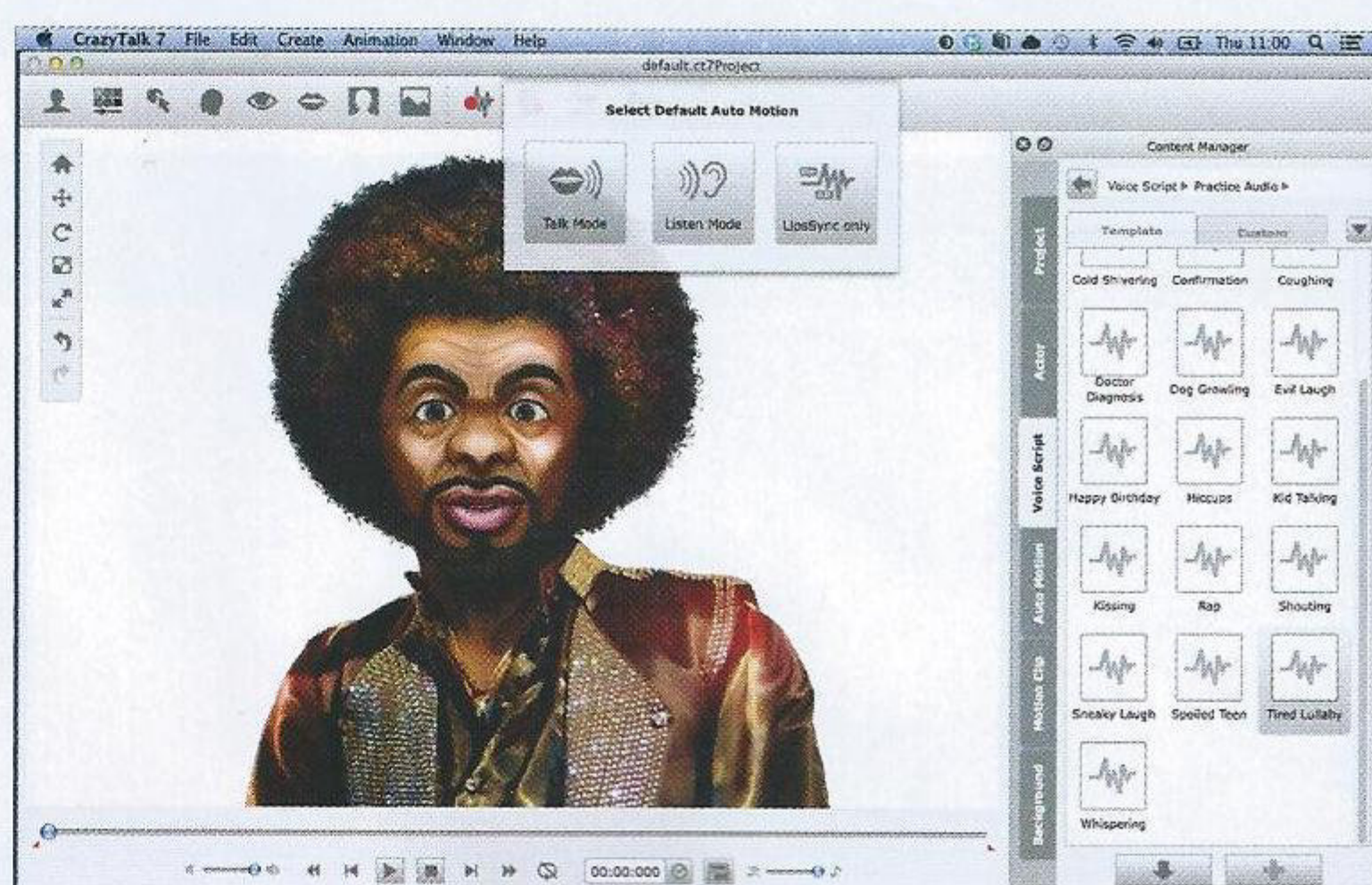
Step-by-step | CrazyTalk7 Create an automated animation
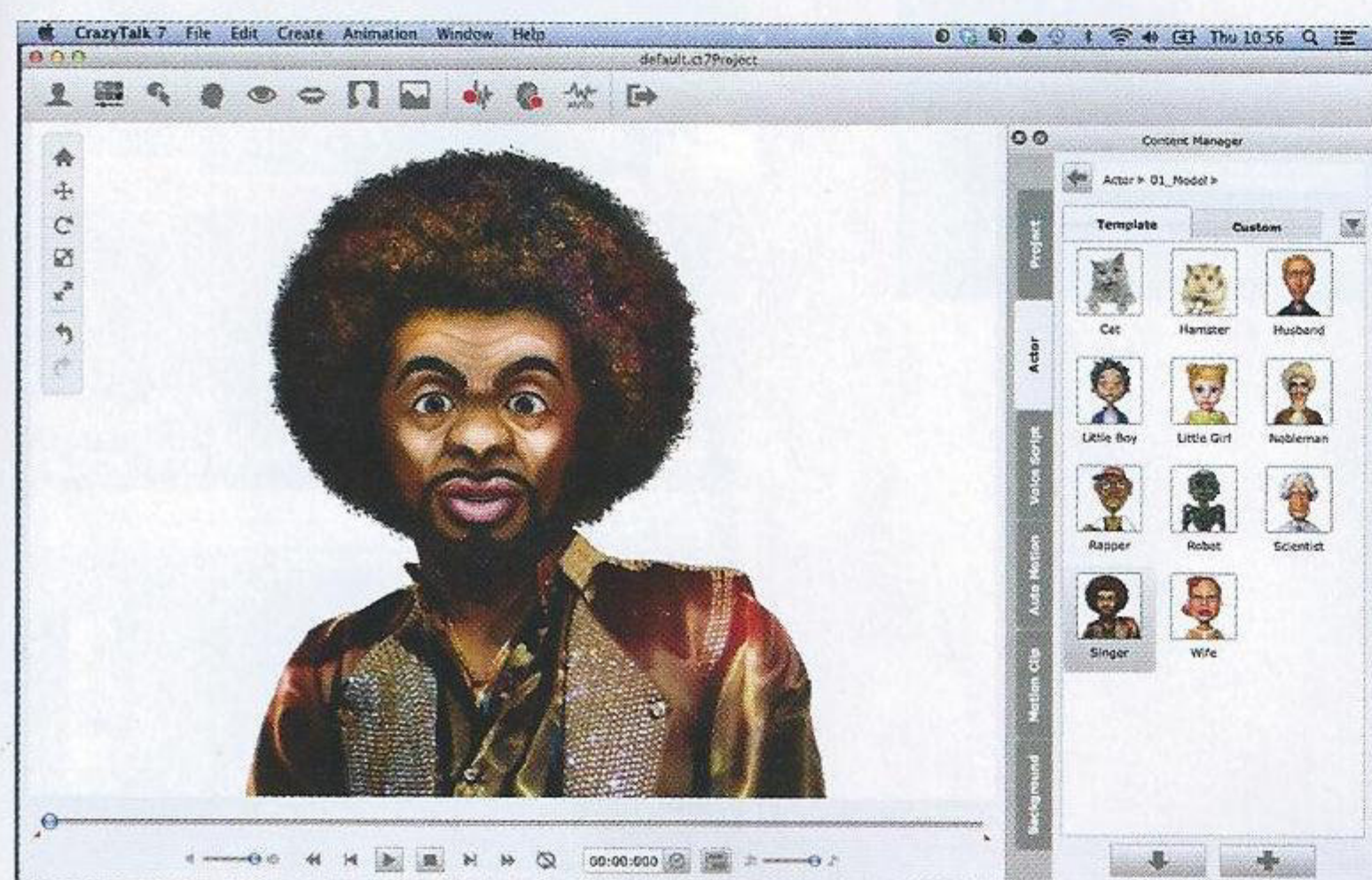

1: Choose an actor
Launch the app and then start a new project by holding the Command and N keys. On the right-hand side, hit the Actor tab and then drag in the character you would like to use throughout the animation.

2: Add a voice
Give your character some dialogue by selecting a clip from the Voice Script tab. You will then be given three import options. Talk Mode is your best bet for now, as it animates both the lips and body automatically.
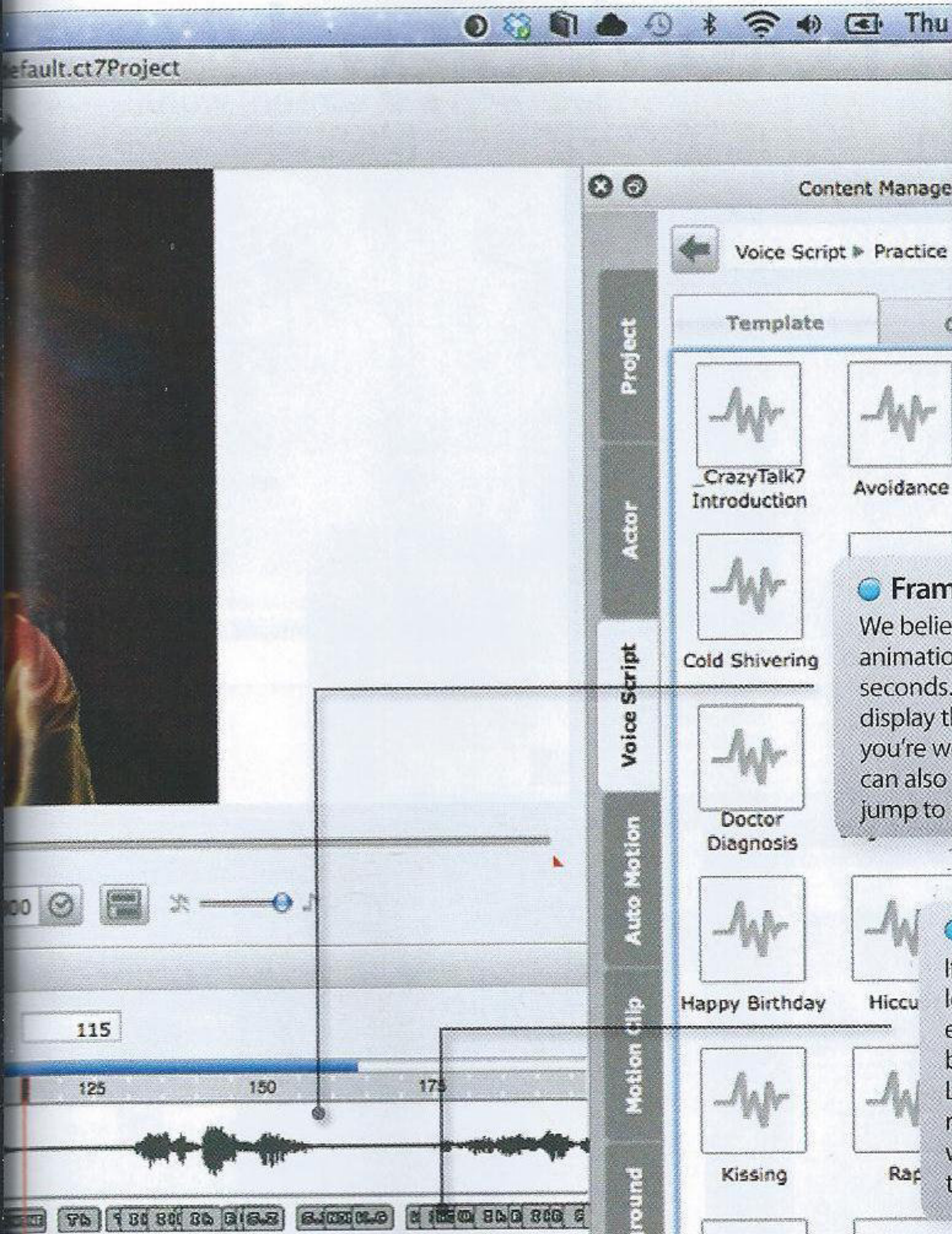
● Knowledge base

Using phonemes
At any time, you can add phonemes manually in the Timeline using the Lips Sync function. However, knowing which phonemes are appropriate for a particular word can be difficult. To save time, you can easily bring up your webcam by selecting Create New Actor. Rather than choosing Import Image though, select Camera and start figuring out the mouth shapes you need for your project!

● Frame by frame
We believe it's easier to think of animation in frames, rather than seconds. The Timeline will always display the current frame that you're working on, however you can also type in a specific frame to jump to it instantly

● Lips track
If any of the animation looks unnatural, the easiest way to fix it is by locating it on the Lips track. Each symbol represents a mouth shape which can be replaced in the phoneme library

Import your own materials

It's fun to mess around with the characters provided by CrazyTalk7, but the only way you'll create something really memorable is by using your own creations. So try drawing a caricature, maybe take a photograph of a friend and then record some dialogue with your Mac's built-in mic…

1 Hit the top-left hand button to create a new character. Follow the straightforward steps to add some anchor points, a facial wireframe and orientation settings.

2 The button with a waveform and red circle lets you add your own audio track. This can be background music or dialogue for your character to impersonate.
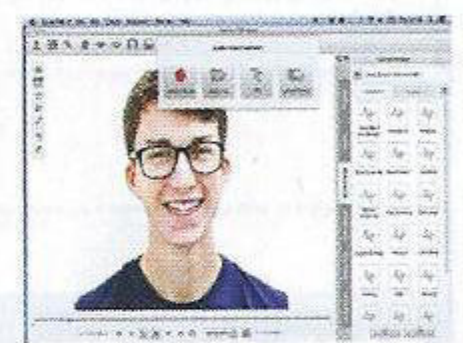
3 Before adding your own background image, use the Mask Editing function to trace around the inner boundaries of the character. Anything remaining will be deleted.
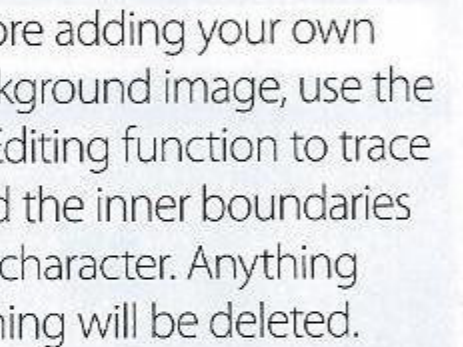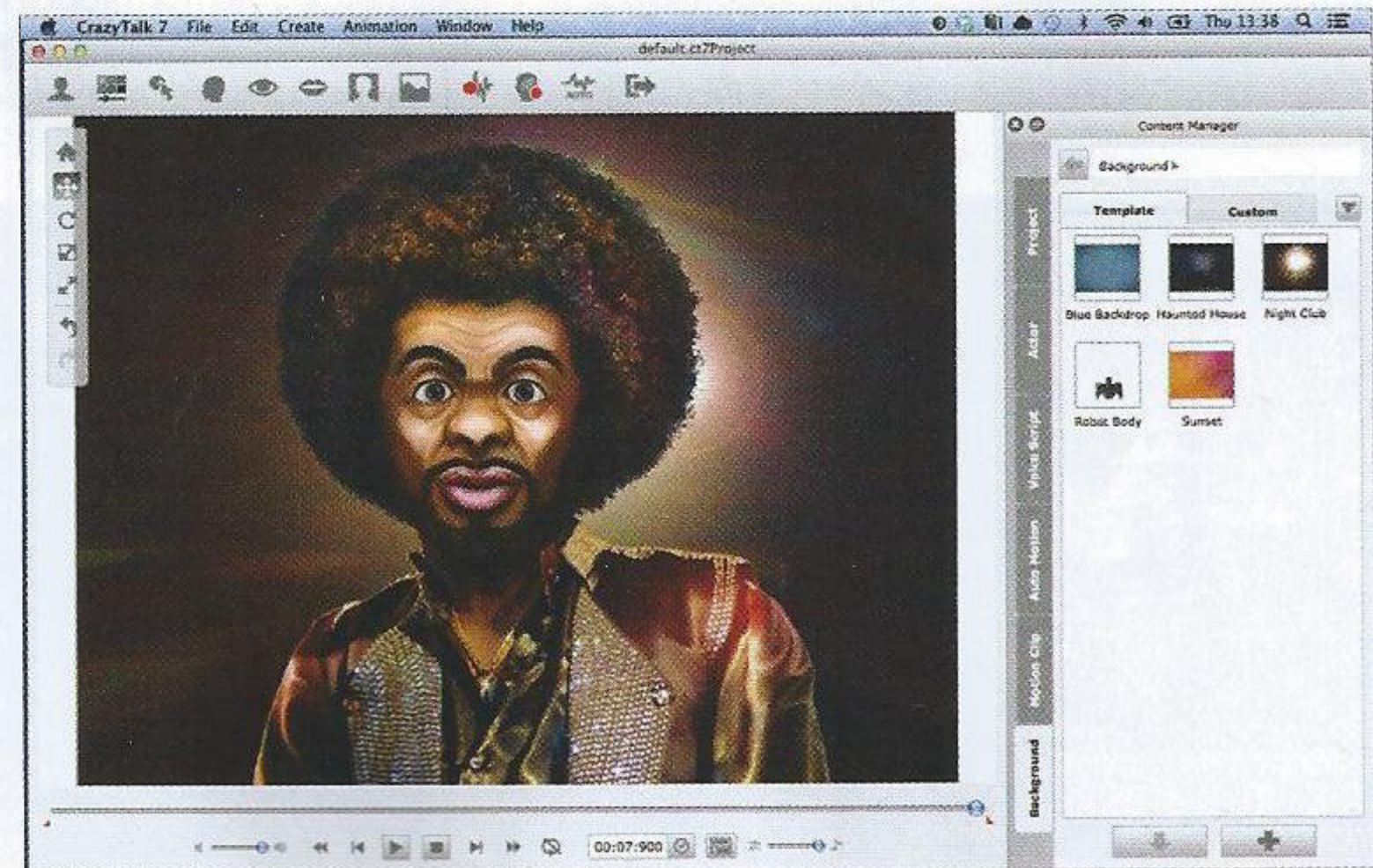
4 Use the Background Setting button to add your own personal backdrop. This could be a photograph, or something you've drawn and scanned in.
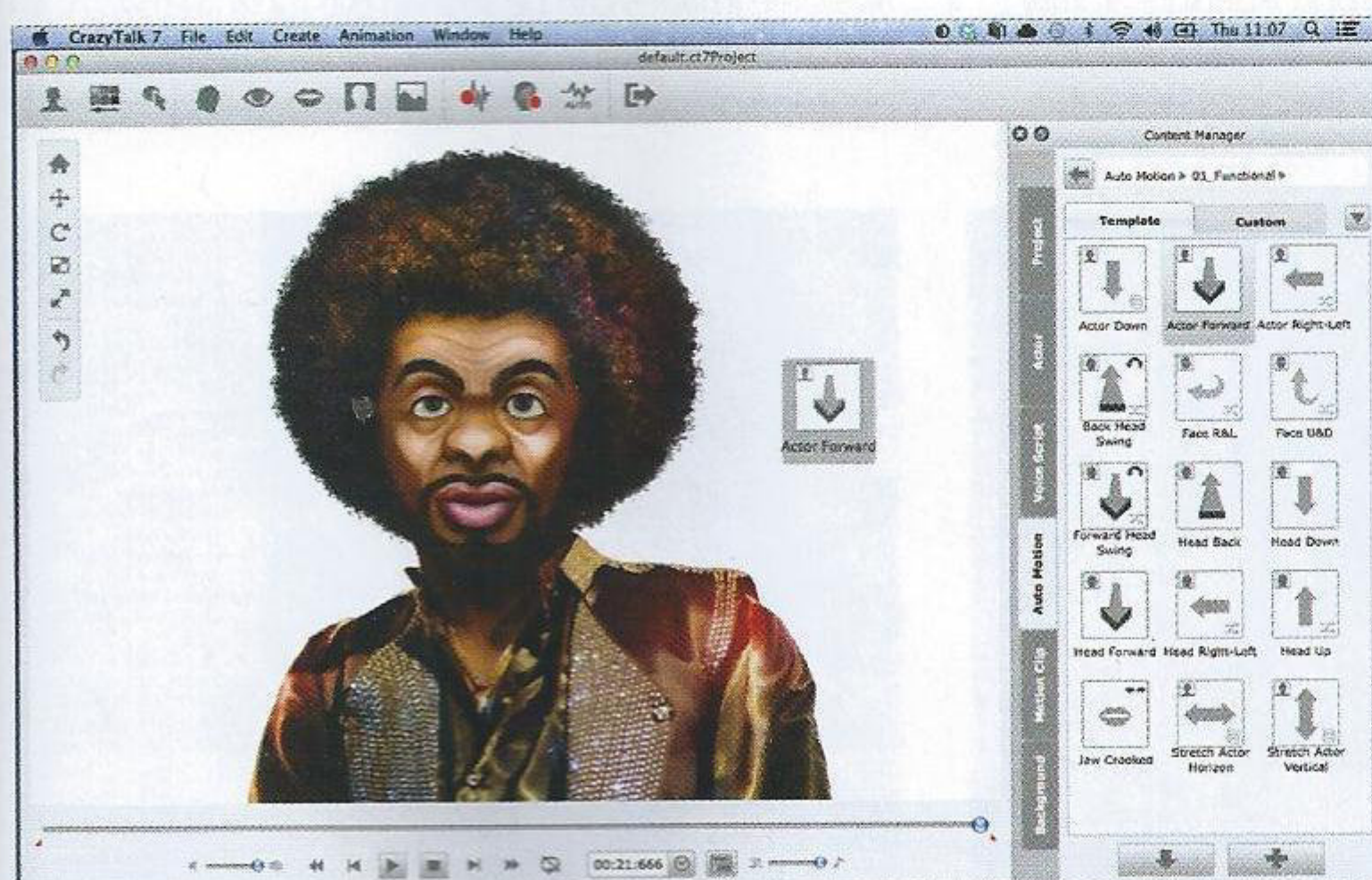
3: Show some moves
Preview the animation. If it's not perfect, go under the Auto Motion tab and select a new template for your character. The icon in the top-left hand corner indicates whether it will affect the face or the entire body.

4: Use a backdrop
Add some context using the Background tab. Take your pick from any of the scenes provided and then drag it onto your project. Once you're finished, use the Export button located on the far right of the top toolbar.