

# Viewfinders

*Next Club Meeting: Wednesday March 14th, 2007, 7:30 - 9:30 pm  
Cupertino Room, Quinlan Center, 10185 N. Stelling Rd., Cupertino, CA*

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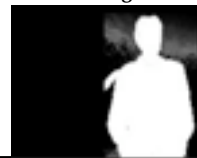
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## February Meeting Highlights

*At last months meeting, Fred Pfof took us along the development road from primitive audio wire recorders through todays era of high quality audio and video tape recorders, still in use in the broadcasting industry at this time.*

*Frank Swanson conducted the second in the series of "Tips and Tricks," our new regular club meeting presentation.*

**Recollections: A History of Video Tape Recording**

Fred Pfof spent many years at Ampex as a lead engineer in the development of video recording for the broadcasting industry. Ampex had become a leader in audio magnetic tape recording in the late 1940's. Spurred by Bing Crosby's desire to be able to pre-tape his television shows, the company took up the challenge of inventing a practical system that could video record entire shows at high quality. Other companies both in the US and abroad, had struggled with the problem with very limited success. Ampex's answer was the invention of the Quadruplex



Dolby who later went on to found Dolby Laboratories.

Ampex's breakthrough was in pursuing a method in which recording heads were rotated at high speed while the tape movement was kept

slow. Quad machines held four recording heads that



rotated at 14,400 rpm. The video is written across the 2 inch wide tape which moved across



format that became the international standard. The team of engineers that made this possible included chief engineer Charlie Ginsburg, Fred Pfof and Ray

the heads at 15 inches per second, allowing a recording time of 1 hour on a single reel of tape.

By 1967 Ampex had developed so much expertise in the art of video recording it was able to introduce a portable video recorder, the model VR-3000. This revolutionized the recording of high quality video in the field. It did not require long cables or support vehicles and could be installed anywhere, including aircraft.

Fred Pfof was intimately involved in engineering these and other Ampex successes and has been rewarded for his achievements three times by the Television Academy. He is the proud owner of three EMMY's, one of them being the first ever given in the "Lifetime Achievement" category.



**Tech Tips: Part 2**

Frank Swanson presented the second in his "Tech Tips" series. This one gave us good advice on keeping a steady camera. See a recap of the lessons on page 5.

**Try Again**

For technical reasons, Bill Mannion's movie, "A visit to Hawaii in Silicon Valley" will be shown at a later club meeting.

Preparations:

## A Journey to India

By Gordon Peterson

*Club member Gordon Peterson has just returned from a trip to India. He relates his planning and experiences.*

I tried to anticipate what I would need to have with me to document my visit to India. A big challenge would be the dimly lit Ajanta and Ellora caves which were the main goal of my visit. These were excavated, sculpted and decorated between 200 BC and 650 AD by Buddhist and later Jain and Hindu monks. My fellow videographer, Bart Wittekind, had arranged to take strong video lights. I decided to take my Digital 8 Sony camcorders which have very good low light capability and consider infrared videography that can get a good non-color image in dark situations. The camera's infrared light is good up to around 30 feet. I also have an accessory light, purchased to take video of owls and other evening-night creatures. This gives both "regular light" and infrared light for up to 90 feet. It mounts on a shoe on top of the camcorder and uses the camcorder battery for power. I consider the Sony 520 Digital 8 camcorder the best all round camcorder available. It has a wide angle to 25X optical telephoto lens and a "smart shoe" camcorder powered external shotgun mike. This can be set to increase the aspect of the mike as you zoom in and out, or set to full shotgun. The camcorder also has an external mike jack. It's one downfall is not having manual white balance, though the automatic white balance is very good. Batteries are available that provide up to 4 hours of video taking. It has a short startup time of around 5 seconds, though I wish it were shorter. External buttons control manual or automatic focus, exposure and preprogrammed settings for special videographic situations like close-ups, bright background, sun set

and sun rise, very low light color, and fast action. Using these features gives far superior video. It is rugged and has operated, in a wide range of temperatures and humidity. I recommend you consider such features when buying a camcorder for both travel and general use.

The other thing I wanted to capture were the voices of native guides that we planed to hire. I rigged up a wireless mike for the guide and an external mini-wide area or shotgun mike for ambient sound. These were connected to the camcorder through an external miniature mixer from Azden. The mixer provides for 3 input mikes. Input 1 goes on the left channel and input 2 goes on the right channel of the stereo recording of the camcorder. Input 3 goes to both sides. Each mixer input is independently controlled for sound level. I connected the mikes so that I could later control the level, if



necessary, during later audio editing. I also took a lens cleaning kit. I use a fine lens brush to wipe away any dust particles. Next I gently breathe on the lens, followed by a Q-tip to dab away the breath moisture. Lastly I use a micro-fiber lens cloth to lightly dab away any remaining moisture or particles. Avoid circular rubbing of the lens which can scratch the fine color correction coating on the lens. NEVER use a rough piece of material (I see this a lot among photographers and videographers). You will grind the dirt particles into the lens coating and have permanent abrasions, which will require recoating.

Last of all I took my elastic camcorder shoulder harness to carry in a ready position for use and to keep the weight off my neck. I took a padded photographer's pack to carry my other camcorder, chargers, extra bat-

teries and exposed videotape. I take one tape per day. I've never used that much, but I want to have some extra. Having two Sony 520 Digital 8 camcorders, one makes a backup and one set of accessories will fit either of them. I take foreign plug electrical adapters that will fit the US plug to the foreign sockets. The Sony chargers automatically adjust to 50 or 60 cycle, 120 or 220 voltage, used abroad. I also carry a light tripod that can break down into sections not longer than 18" and can attach to my belt by a carabiner. It takes a lot of planning and packing to be ready to take video in the field.

Unfortunately most of my preparations were wasted. In India, taking video was restricted inside the caves and at most monuments, museums, forts, and mosques. Still photography without flash was allowed. The government restriction on video was to



deter commercial videography. Our guides spoke such bad English that it could hardly be understood, so my plans for recording them were wasted and most of the video I shot was of what I saw driving on the roads and in the narrow streets. I'm wondering if it is worth the effort to plan for quality video on my trips. It takes a lot of effort and I actually don't get to see much more on my trip than the small image on the camcorder display. Because she cannot travel with me, I make a special effort to get good video so I can show my wife what I experienced. I also wanted to make a nice story of my travel for the club. Maybe I would enjoy the trip more if I gave less attention to the video making and just take what are called record shots of my travels.





### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Well, we are a couple of months into the new year with a new President and Board. I think it's time for a status check to let you know where we are going this year.*

As your President I think any club like Viewfinders relies on energy. It relies on the energy of the Board and the energy of its members to continue to move forward, to help its membership learn new skills and to draw in new members. I think our job, as the 2007 Board, is to help you get this energy instilled in your video work. And here is how we are going about doing that.

We have started the year off with a couple of challenges. One, Brian has implemented a "Quarterly Themed Video Contest". The concept is to ask

members to plan, shoot, edit and show a short they created on a particular subject. This is based on the idea that multiple people see the same thing through different eyes and can produce different concepts of the same subject. Now, that is interesting but how does it relate to me, you ask? Well, if you would like to expand what you do in video, to learn or try something new, to step outside the normal video that you do, would it not be a lot easier in a 1-5 minute custom video? It is an opportunity for you to stretch your skill sets without having to worry about messing up a major piece of your work. Think of these contest videos as candy. Not a part of your regular diet, but fun to try and taste the results. I see it as a way to learn a new approach, a new style, a new format and a great diversion in which you may find something to bring back to your normal work. Try shooting and editing a few. I think it can be fun.

Another challenge presented is to our members is to help develop a club logo. The concept here is two fold: One, I would like to see us develop a distinctive logo that is easily recognizable and lets others know who we are as a club. It can be used on letterhead, business cards, our internet site, club produced videos, clothing (shirts and hats), and awards. I think it would be great if it is used on our annual club awards. Second, if you are standing

in a crowd of people with cameras shooting an event, or a single person with a camcorder and you are wearing a club identifiable logo on your person, then it lets others know that you are a knowledgeable, experienced video person. It can help you get better shots (they may stay out of your shots) and, if you are interested, open up avenues of conversation on video with others that obviously have the same interests as you. You can meet some great friends from simple contacts. Either way, I think a club logo will add greatly to the club's personality and exposure. So work on some concepts and get them to Brian.

Along with the above mentioned items, this year I would like to continue to present you, as members, the opportunity to learn and become energized through interesting programs, clinics on techniques and tools, and through meeting and working with other members on projects like the movie production crew. With all of this comes a greater energy that draws in new members and keeps the club vibrant. New members can bring in new personalities, new approaches and new enthusiasm. I will re-visit this later in the year. In the meantime, let us know how we are doing.

*Bob Meach*

## Sunnyvale Heritage Museum Project

Club members Mary Johnson, John Dietrich and Gordon Peterson have been busy recently, producing a video of Sunnyvale's Heritage Museum project to be built in the Orchard Park near the Sunnyvale Community Center.

Dedicated to California's pioneering Murphy family, a replica of their home is to be built and furnished at the site. Part one of the movie, covering ground breaking, has been completed and Mary expects parts two and three to be completed in May. These will include personal inter-

views with Murphy descendants and an historian.

The Martin Murphy party crossed the plains in 1844 to California. They were the first party to cross the Sierras in a covered wagon, the first to bring oxen across the plains and the first to use the route now used by Union and Pacific Railroads. The Donner party used the route two years later and Martin Murphy, Jr. was a member of the party who rescued them.

Martin Murphy, Jr. is credited with founding Sunnyvale, the Convent of Notre Dame and Santa Clara College. Other Murphys founded several other towns in California.

The original house was occupied from 1850 to 1950 by the Murphy family who then donated it to the city of Sunnyvale. it was then designated a State Historic Landmark but was razed in 1961 after a fire.





*A column intended to include video techniques, news of interest, or random bits of relevant information. Members are encouraged to submit items.*

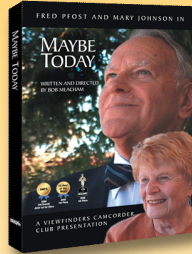
**SAVING SPACE**

One of the things we in video always seem to struggle with is disc space. If you shoot a lot of video and store it on your hard drives you are constantly struggling to keep available free space. Here is one thing that can help. You use music files both to listen to and to add to your videos. Did you know that you can store up to 7 hours of music files on a single DVD? If the music files that are primarily used for your video work are taking up disc space you can transfer them to a DVD for long term storage, thereby freeing up that disc space on your computer. Don't forget to de-frag your hard drive after you remove the files.

**CLEANING UP**

Since DVD burners are simply optical drives they are susceptible to problems with dust. A good habit to get into is to periodically clean your optical drives using compressed air to remove dust, and possibly lint. Canisters of compressed air can be found at most electronics stores or on line. If you can remove the drive from your machine it will be better but if not, turn off the machine, open the drive by using the mechanical override (small hole in front) with a straightened out paper clip. Once it is open carefully blow air into the drive using the straw and direct it into the drive at an angle to allow the air and dust to come out of the front of the drive opening. Use short bursts of air rather than long blasts. Doing this carefully can help prolong the life of your optical drives.

*Submitted by Bob Meacham, President*



**"Maybe Today" DVD's Still Available for Sale!**

If you haven't a copy of this award-winning club movie, now's your chance to own one.

For a mere \$5.00 you can choose either a DVD with the movie alone (version 1) or accompanied with a trailer (version 2)

Since it's original screenings at three movie festivals it has been seen at other locations where it has garnered praise for its story and production quality.

Call or email Frank Swanson, or talk to him at club meetings. He'll be pleased to fill your order

**VIEWFINDERS VIDEO PRODUCTIONS**

**"Dearly Departed"**

A revised draft of a shooting script by Brian Lucas has been read and discussed by the production team.

In late February team members went out on several location searches for both interior and exterior scenes, to check for lighting, sound and shoots. They are close to establishing those that they need.

Actual shooting is scheduled begin in late spring or early summer.

Team members include:

- Producer: Bob Meacham
- Director and Writer: Brian Lucas
- Assistant Director: Fred Pfof
- Videographer: Franz Helbig
- Audio: Jack Gorham

VVP invites Viewfinders members to get involved in making the new movie. There are many assistant positions available, so here's a chance to hone skills and get some hands-on experience working on a movie crew.

**REFRESHMENT VOLUNTEERS WANTED**

Below is a list of those members who have offered to provide refreshments for our meetings. If you would like to volunteer to help out, please email Brian Lucas.

- March: Bernie Wood
- September: Frank Yap
- November: Fred and Joan Pfof

We have seven months to fill. Your help is needed.

**TREASURER'S REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2007**

Bank Account Beginning 1/18/07	\$763.15
Income Total	\$195.00
Dues (6)	\$180.00
DVD sales (3)	\$ 15.00
Expenses Total	\$ 16.00
DVD Production (4)	\$ 16.00
Bank Account Ending 2/28/07	\$942.15



Frank Swanson, Treasurer for 2007

# TECH TIPS

By Frank Swanson

*At the end of each monthly general meeting program of the Viewfinders Club, I will be presenting a 10-minute live presentation or a video clip that will provide you with the chance to expand your knowledge of camcorders, shooting techniques, audio recording, editing tricks and tips, or post-production tools.*

At our March meeting we screened Digital Juice's Tech Tips "**Hold It Right There,**" an 8-minute video which gives camcorder owners five tips to help shoot steady footage for your movies. Shots that shake break a cardinal rule of production: they draw the viewers attention away from the subject and onto the edge of the frame. The content of your productions is key. Anything that distracts your viewer from the main message has got to go, and that includes shaky shots. Here are five tips for steadys shooting:

**1. Use a Tripod:** it's the best tool for shooting steady shots. A tripod



makes it easy to shoot steady and allows you to make smooth moves. There are a few things to look for in a camcorder tripod: 1) A heavier tripod than those used for digital still cameras - the heavier the better to provide a stable platform, especially when you touch the camcorder's controls while recording;

2) A fluid head to avoid friction when making panning moves (left/right or up/down); 3) A bubble level to make your shots look on the level especially when shooting outdoors; 4) A long strong pan handle to pan and tilt; 5) A quick-release plate to pop your camcorder on/off quickly when it's time to set-up or switch to hand-held mode, and

6) A set of adjustable leg locks for those uneven terrains. Finally, spend some time practicing your pans and tilts after adjusting your head locks to where they're not too tight or not too loose. Smooth starts and ends here are essential to making your shots look more professional.

**2. Keep Your Hands Off:** When you're shooting a static shot, keep your



hands off the tripod, not even resting them on the camcorder or the pan handle. The smallest of vibrations can be seen on the screen.

Frame up, lock your tripod knobs, press record and let go; repeat this process for each shot. Also, keeping your hands off will eliminate the temptation to do those unnecessary zooms in and out that are seldom done by the pros.

**3. Stand Steady:** When you just can't take a tripod, you have to go



hand-held. Proper body position is the key to this technique. Stand with your feet about shoulders width apart to give yourself a strong grounded foundation, and bend your knees a little bit so they act as shock absorbers and stabilize your shots.

Tuck in the elbow of your shooting arm so it's vertical to keep the camcorder level. Use your free hand to help hold the camcorder and provide extra support. Rotate your hips (not your arms or wrist) to pan left/right. When panning, frame-up with your ending shot (i.e., face your toes where the shot will end), then twist your body back to the starting point (without moving your feet) and start recording, pivoting from the waist to make your move to a rock solid finish at the frame-up position.

**4. Find Substitute Supports:** there are all kinds of substitute supports when you look for them: a table top, a car hood or roof, a tree limb, a bench, a sandbag, a big bag of beans or rice



will do the job. If placing the camcorder on something is not possible, find something to lean on or

place your elbows on a fence board, a bleacher seat, or a car. Even bracing your back against a tree or building will do.

**5. Get Close and Zoom Out:** Your



lens settings can work for you or against you. If you zoom in from wide angle to telephoto, your

lens magnifies more than just the subject of your shot, but also the movements that you make with your camcorder.

As you zoom out those miniscule camcorder movements are minimized. So if you want to get closer to the action, it's best to physically move in closer to your subject with your legs - yes, take a walk closer and zoom out with a wide angle lens setting. The pro's do this all the time.

If you want your work to look more professional, start by stabilizing your shots. These five tips for steady camcorder shooting can be seen on your computer by going to [www.digitaljuice.com](http://www.digitaljuice.com), click on "DJTV" on the top of your screen, then click on the "all videos" tab, scroll down through the choices until you reach "*Take 5: Hold It Right There*" and click the video icon. There are a whole bunch of other great instructional videos from Digital Juice that are just waiting for you to watch while you're on their website. I'll pick another one for screening at our March meeting, so be sure to come and see my choice for next time.



## VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hollywood has a lot to answer for. Surely it was the studios' output that hooked us on to our hobby. Through our formative years we sat in our local flea pits, lapping up adventures and romances played out, giant-sized, on the screen above us. Tough-guys and gorgeous women went to places and did things that we envied and determined to get for ourselves one day. Villains were easily spotted; they did rotten things and the goodies didn't. No confusion. What they did do however, heroes and villains alike, was what we now abhor: they smoked.

Today, tobacco is generally regarded as smelly, unhealthy and disgusting. Okay, I'll agree about the first two but disgusting? Who would have said so watching Rita Hayworth stare deeply into Cary Grant's eyes, take a drag, tilt her head back and slowly expel smoke from her nose and mouth. Red hot! We fantasized about lighting two cigarettes and placing one between the full ruby lips of Marilyn. How sexy could Marlene have been without wreathes of smoke curling around her nostrils. And how dramatic would Bette Davis's



airy gestures be without a cigarette clenched between her fingers?

And the men. Who would buy Leslie Howard as a professor without the pipe? No western bad guy could scare a mouse unless he could ricochet a gob of tobacco juice into a spittoon at 30 yards. Cowboys weren't cowboys if they couldn't master the art of filling a paper spill from a tobacco pouch and, one-handed, roll a smoke. No fancy riverboat gambler took the "rubes" without a cheroot clamped between his teeth. Duke Wayne couldn't get started punching until he had dropped his stogy to the saloon floor and very deliberately ground it under his heel. Lee J. Cobb's fat cigar was his badge of office on the waterfront. Actors must have taken courses on "a million-and-one things to do with a smoke."

This is a cautionary tale. Just remember, when your next family get-together rolls around and the table groans beneath trays of food and the family looks on in joyful expectancy as granddad begins slicing the ham or sirloin and you pull out the trusty camcorder to record the event for posterity...

Sometime in the far future at a screening of your video, people will gasp and grow pale and even gag. "Oh my God! They used to eat animals!"

*Brian Lucas*

### VIEWFINDERS QUARTERLY THEMED VIDEO CONTEST

*Theme:*

**"WATER"**

**Deadline for the club short video contest is the April club meeting**

Acceptable run time for entries will be from one to ten minutes.

Only Viewfinders club members are eligible to enter.

Winners will be voted by club members in attendance.

*Good Luck!*

## SPOT THE MOVIE LOGO

If you know your movie companies you should have no trouble identifying the logos at right.

Of course, they are not complete, that would be too easy.

Answers next month.

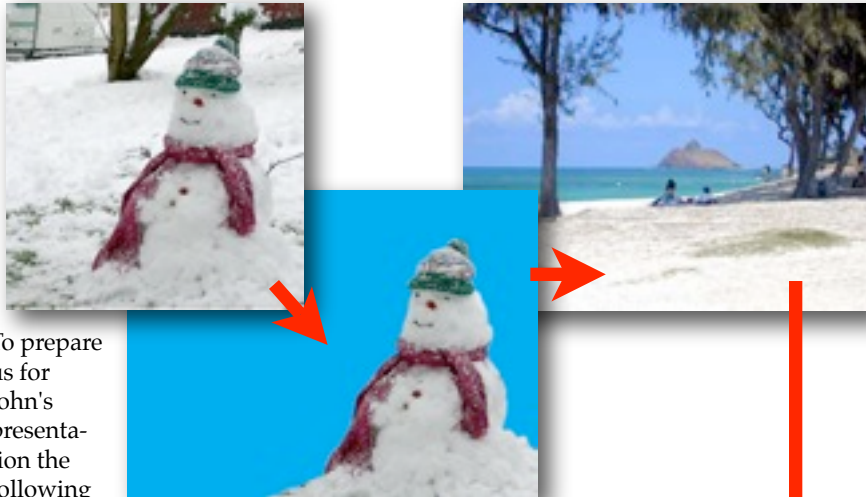


MARCH MEETING  
MAIN FEATURE

# Chroma Key: Now you see it, now you don't.

With John Dietrich

*Our main event at the March meeting will be a lesson on the technique called "Chroma Key" to be given by club member John Dietrich. Those of us that have seen the club movie "Maybe Today" will have already viewed an example of his work in this area.*



To prepare us for John's presentation the following basics should help us understand the idea.

Chroma Key, sometimes called Blue Screen or Green Screen is a method that allows the movie maker to place a person or object into a background not shot at the same time. The movie industry has utilized the method to produce epic films like "Superman" and "Star Wars" but the technique is also used extensively for cost and time considerations. It is a lot faster and cheaper to shoot one's actors, covering multiple scenes, in a studio rather than their traveling to locations. The scenes, sans actors, are shot separately by a second film crew and the two sets of films are then sewn together.

In our club movie "Maybe Today" you may remember a scene of a woman looking out of a bus window at a man standing at a bus stop. We saw both the woman and the man in the same shot. In fact, the two people were photographed in entirely different locations. John "keyed" the two scenes together.

The Chroma Key technique requires the use of a blue or green screen. These colors were chosen because they are complimentary (opposites on the color wheel) to the color of human skin and therefore most easy to separate from skin tones. For technical reasons blue backgrounds works best for film while green backgrounds are generally more suitable for digital video.



Relatively inexpensive computer applications for Chroma Keying are available for the desk top video maker. GeeThree's Slick Effects package contains one for iMovie at \$50 and there are several for PC users. Read the system requirements carefully though if you're thinking of buying.

## "Filming For Fun" Contest

By Bill Mannion

Our Club will Host this year's annual "Filming For Fun Contest" sponsored by the Northern California Council of Amateur Movie Makers (NCCAMC).

There are five Clubs represented by the NCCAMC. The Viewfinders in Cupertino, San Jose Movie / Videomakers in San Jose, Peninsula Video Makers in Redwood City, Westwood Video Club in San Francisco, and the Sacramento Video Club.

Each Club pays one dollar per member to NCCAMC to help fund these kind of activities which serve to provide venues for Club members to meet other Club members and to have an opportunity to show their video productions to a broader (and possibly more critical) audience.

Entries are judged by carefully selected and video savvy judges and prizes are awarded by NCCAMC.

This year, the "Filming For Fun Contest" video entries will be viewed, judged, and awarded prizes at a luncheon to be held at Michael's at Shoreline on Saturday, 28 April.

Be sure to reserve that date on your calendar, plan to enter a video, and come join the fun at Michael's. And bring a friend!

More details will be announced at the March Viewfinders meeting, so be sure to attend.

**BASIC RULES**

*Deadline: April 7th, 2007*

*Open to all individual NCCAMC members*

*Closed to previous video winners*

*Max. running time 15 mins*

*VHS, S-VHS and DVDs.*

*Entry is free*

*For information and entry form, call JoAnn Pfost (650) 967-4679*

**CREDITS**

Editor: Gaillyne Bouret  
 Publisher: Brian Lucas  
 lucasbouret@sbcglobal.net

Viewfinder Newsletter is published during the third week of each month for Viewfinders Camcorder Club of Cupertino members.

Please send announcements and articles for submission to the publisher during the two weeks previous to the following monthly issue. Send address and email corrections to the publisher.

**MONTHLY CLUB MEETINGS**

Held in the Cupertino Room, Quinlan Center. 10188 N. Stelling Road, Cupertino, California. Watch the calendar for programs updates. Admission is free.

**OFFICERS**

President: Bob Meacham  
 R9meach@aol.com

Vice President: Brian Lucas  
 lucasbouret@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer: Frank Swanson  
 frank\_video@swansonhome.com

Secretary: Fred Pfof  
 fpof@aol.com

**WEBSITE**

[www.viewfindersclub.org](http://www.viewfindersclub.org)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2007

<p><b>JAN</b>                  Jan 3 Meeting: "10 Best of the West" and NCCAMA movies screenings.                  Jan 5th San Jose Meeting: "Gorillas..."</p>	<p><b>FEB</b>                  Feb 7 Meeting: Fred Pfof on "The History of Video Tape"                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>MARCH</b>                  March 14 Meeting: John Dietrich on "Matting and Chromakey Techniques"                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>APRIL</b>                  April 4 Meeting: Jim Visser on "Slide Show Production and Techniques"                  Members Quarterly Short Video Competition screening. Theme: "Water"                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>MAY</b>                  May 2 Meeting: Club Members Video Screening Night.                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>JUNE</b>                  Inter-club Exchange Night (still to be confirmed)                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>JULY</b>                  MV Student Video Festival                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>AUG</b>                  Panel Discussion of "Audio in Video: Microphones, Capturing, Editing and Voice-overs"                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>SEPT</b></p>	<p><b>OCT</b>                  Club Annual Video Contest. Screenings.                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>NOV</b>                  Annual Gold DVD Awards and Social.                  Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>DEC</b></p>

