

*Next Club Meeting: Tuesday, August 12th, 2008.
7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Cupertino Room,
Quinlan Center, 10185 N. Stelling Rd.,
Cupertino, CA*



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July Meeting Highlights

Main Features:

Nimitz School Movie Night

Tech Tips

"Avoiding Faulty Fonting"
Workshop by Frank Swanson

An Evening of Nimitz Videos



What happens when you give young children camcorders, suggest a topic or two, and then send them out to shoot a video? Well, you get some pretty interesting movies to watch.

Each year, for several years, Susan Woods, a teacher at Nimitz school has done just that, and each year Susan and the children have brought their movies to screen at the Viewfinders Club.

Most of the movies brought us insights into the cultures of the countries that the children, or their parents, originated from. Others explained favorite pastimes, American history, travel and relationships.

Roei Burstein's movie "Kindness" explained how being kind to others will bring happiness to the giver. **Tamara Bogen** filmed a documentary, "Martin Luther King" covering the great man's life.

Kartik Vats movie, "The Best Opportunity" offered tips for developing a positive attitude to life, and included being polite and having a good sense of humor.

Mustafa Tathsi's video "Soccer" described the games physical benefits and the players positions on the field. **Marina Fuller** pointed out how important and helpful road signs are in her movie "Signs are Everywhere."

August Meeting

"What's New in HD"

A talk by guest speaker
Jason Housel

Continued page 2

Continued from page 1



Michelle Fuller's "What's the Big Idea Ben Franklin?" staged an interview with the statesman and inventor who explained his experiments with lightning, including flying a key attached to a kite into a storm, which led to the invention of the lightning conductor. **Peleg Rand** examined "Holidays Around the World" and how people from different cultures celebrate each other's histories, including his fellow students at his multi-cultural school. **Neha Agarwal** and her family had been in India last October and attended a festival there. Her movie "India" describes the countries costumes and food. **Sonny Diep** made his movie "China" about his chinese ancestors, their ways and their country. **Mai Barak's** "Panama Safari" recorded her family's holiday in Panama, including swimming, hiking and

watching a Central American tribal dance.

Jennifer Zhou's "China" is similar to Sonny Diep's in explaining her ancestors and their culture.

Young Lee came to this country not knowing the language and yet she clearly narrates her "Starting Over." She tells about her nervousness on her first day at the new school but found her teachers kind, and quickly made new friends.

Manfred Lau's "China" was the evening's third movie describing his chinese ancestors and similar to the other two "China" videos.

Itay Barylka's "Video Games: Pros and Cons" covers the history of the pastime, from early Attari games to the present crop of games and manufacturers. His pros included: Fun, and Educational. His cons included: Time Consuming, Expensive, and Many are Overly Violent.

We congratulate them all, and their teacher Susan Woods for putting on a great show, and look forward to the children returning next year.

TECH TIPS

A recap of Frank Swanson's popular workshop for July is found on page 7.

OTHER NOTES

- New club officers wanted for 2009.
- Discounted Pinnacle products available through Bob Meacham.
- Camera workshop in August. See page 4.
- Mac and PC Users Groups: Consider joining to improve skills.
- "One Minute Movie" Festival. Anyone interested?
- Articles for the Newsletter. Please submit.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The "dog days" are here and during these days we often start thinking about the cooler days and colors of Fall. Get your cameras ready and find a great seat, they will be here soon enough.

I would like to introduce a new concept (at least for me) on Member Video Sharing. We ask members to bring in their work and we try to find time to show them at the meetings. The biggest problem is that we have a short time to do this and most videos are lengthy. I purpose we also try this simple, effective concept called "5X5". The idea, or challenge, to the videographer/editor is to select a theme (any theme) and put together

five, 5 second clips around that theme. In other words, 5 clips with a duration of 5 seconds each. The challenge is to select the best 5 seconds of any clip and put together 5 clips that give the viewer an idea of what your theme is. That is the basic challenge but the real benefit is it trains you to use your camera to shoot these clips. It trains you to hold on a shot long enough to get at least good 5 seconds from it. It gets you loading and editing the footage without a HUGE time commitment. And, best of all, it allows you to show a short piece to the other members that you can complete in an afternoon or less. The themes can be anything (hey, these are only 25 seconds each, even I can sit through that). They can be a pet, a car ride, the beach, trees, the mountains, a National Park, the Eiffel Tower, camera tricks, lens tests, different video style tests. They can be just about anything. Surprise me!

So, I purpose we encourage our members to create some "5X5"s and bring them in to view. And, when you have improved your skill sets (on camera, editing and storytelling) make that bigger video and bring it is

as well. Think of the "5X5"s as appetizers scattered around the larger videos.

If you have enjoyed the activities of Viewfinders over the past couple of years and would like to see it continue, then you are needed. After one year as your VP and two years as your President I am stepping away from the inner workings of the club. I need you (yes, you reading this right now) to take your turn and help keep the club as strong as it is now, maybe even improve on it. At a time when most clubs are declining in membership Viewfinders has been able to not only maintain it's membership but increase it. We have a base of good people but someone needs to be the one to set the course and keep the course. There are a few jobs that I know each of you can do and I encourage you to do just that.

Become an Officer and Board Member in 2009!

Bob Mach

Welcome to Viewfinder's SUDOKU August Puzzle

The goal of Sudoku is to fill in every empty box with one of six letters. Each letter can appear only once in each horizontal row, as well as only once in each vertical column and only once in each of the six 3X2 rectangles. This month's puzzle uses the letters **E, I, M, O, S** and **V**. No other letters may be used. To help you get started, let's say you wanted to put an "E" in the top left rectangle. You couldn't put it in the second row of that rectangle because there already is an "E" in that row of the rectangle to the right. This leaves only the top left corner box open for the "E". As another clue, the 6-letter word that means "motion pictures" appears somewhere in the puzzle. The answer to this month's puzzle appears on page 6 of this newsletter. Have fun!

Frank Swanson

	I	M	V		
		O	E		
S		I	O		
		E	S		M
		V	I		
		S	M	O	

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The Saga of the Video Projector

When the Viewfinders first started (about 1997) they met in the "card room" at the Senior Center. The room held about thirty people and club members pretty well filled the room at each meeting. Members would bring their videos which would be shown on a twenty-one inch color TV set at the front of the room. If one sat at the front of the room the images were fairly clear but midway back or at the back of the room the pictures were no larger than a postage stamp. When I joined the club about a year later I was disappointed at this method of display so I went on Ebay looking for a projector I could buy for use at the club meetings. I finally found one which was well displayed with its picture

and description (including the fact that it had no lens). I took the bidding up to about \$3000 when I had a call from the owner who said that he had sold the unit three times but each time the bidder had reneged. If I would send him \$1000 the projector would be mine so that was what I did. I then found the specified lens at a store in southern California for another \$1000. Next, I ordered a projection stand from B & H in New York (\$450) and a spare projection bulb (for a backup) from a lamp wholesaler whose catalog I had in my files. (A whooping \$900.) Now with a beautiful JVC tape player (\$700) and a Sony DVD player (\$75) we were all set to project beautiful full screen pictures (12 X 16 feet) on the screen in our new meeting hall at Quinlan Center's Cupertino Room. I'll tell you that JoAnn wasn't very happy with me for spending that kind of money for this "small camcorder club" that I had joined but I felt the club was in dire need of something to spruce up its presentations. I wanted to donate the whole apparatus to Quinlan so they could mount it permanently or at least store it in their equipment room. They would have none of that because there was no warranty on the device and they would be responsible for its safekeeping. As a consequence I store the whole thing

at my home and transport it and set it up each month for our meetings. By the way, that original projection lamp failed after a few months when I inadvertently dropped the projector about one inch to the floor. They are good for 1000 hours if treated right. This one in the projector now has about 500 hours on it. The BIG problem now is that the three LCD screens in the system are fading and consequently there is not much contrast any more and the colors are getting quite weak. If our club could take up a collection of about \$1000 we could buy a new, adequate projector but that is not about to happen. A fortuitous thing happened at the close of our July meeting. GLENN MOOTY approached me carrying a case enclosing an "InFocus" projector which he said we could use for as long as we need it. I tried it out then and it filled the screen with a nice bright, high contrast picture. I think our projector problems are solved again, for a while, at least. Thank you, Glenn, for this very generous contribution to our club! ■

Fred Root

Camera Workshop

Want to improve your camera skills? Want to better understand how your camcorder works? Want to become a better videographer? Plan on attending a 4 hour camera workshop put on by other club members on Saturday, August 23rd, starting at 9 am.

A friend of mine involved in another sport always says, "It's not the arrow, it's the Indian." It is the Indian's (that's you) lack of knowledge and skill, not necessarily the tool, that limits us.

Bring your camera, it's user's manual (almost every camera's manual is available online from the manufacturer's web site), blank tape, tripod

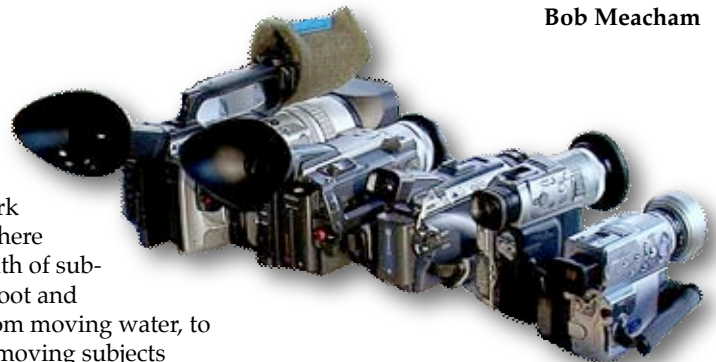
(if you have one) and plan on getting involved in learning your camera's operation. We will help you learn a few basic operations and shooting tricks that might be available with your camera.

Location is TBD (depending on size of group) but will probably be Memorial Park in Cupertino. There you have a wealth of subject matter to shoot and practice with from moving water, to wildlife, to fast moving subjects (kids), to still life (old folks) and flora.

All are great practice to shoot. Club membership required.

Sign up at the August meeting or contact me at R9Meach@aol.com.

Bob Meacham



Working with the Viewfinders Production Group over the last three years has made me envious of the fine prosumer camcorders that some of our members own. Notably those made by Sony and Canon. These cameras have a host of manual controls that allows the shooter to fine-tune the video capture for the best possible picture and audio, often rivaling expensive professional equipment. My JVC point and shooter appeared more like a toy by comparison. I wanted one. But...

Prosumer camcorders are beyond my budget at this time so I had to figure out how to find a camera at a price I could afford that had similar features. This meant looking at refurbished/remanufactured or used camcorders.

Let's start with refurbished. Some people have a horror of buying anything that may once have had a problem. I'm not one of them. Many years ago, a friend of mine worked for the Attari company in the days when they made game consoles for consumers. He offered to get me a refurbished one at half the price of a new unit. I was at first skeptical but he reassured me that refurbished units were a better risk than new ones. When a unit is returned because of a fault, all its features are tested thoroughly before it is repaired. By contrast it is common practice for manufacturers to quality test only one in a batch of new units on the assumption that the rest of the batch will be similar. This isn't always the case and some new units can be faulty. I have bought several remanufactured items in recent years and all, with one exception as noted below, have performed admirably.

Buying a used camcorder, especially from the internet, poses much greater risks. One only has the word of the seller that the item is in good shape and it can be a hassle if one wishes to return it. If one decides to keep it, some expensive repairs may be required. Still, if you have a particular camcorder model in mind, as I did, finding one locally may be fruitless. As refurbished cameras are usually fairly new models and the camera I had in mind

Buying Bargain Camcorders

Brian Lucas



JVC GR-D72, Panasonic PV-DV953, and PV-GS400

was several years old it looked like a used one was my only option.

I had my heart set on a Panasonic PV-GS400, sold in 2004. This is Panasonic's all-time best under \$1500 camcorder (street price around \$1200) they built. It received rave reviews at

the time and compared favorably with Sony and Canon's prosumer cameras. It is loaded with manual controls, a superb Leica lens, manual focusing ring and a three chip sensor. Many controls have dedicated buttons instead of annoying menu selections, and prosumer features like zebra stripes, color bars and audio monitoring. Unfortunately for me, these cameras are highly prized. They do not come up for sale very often and when they do they go for prices close to their original cost. I bid several times on eBay but got left in dust when the bidding went way past what I wanted to spend. I turned to another model. This was the camera that preceded the PV-GS400; Panasonic's PV-DV953 that sold in 2003. Now, we're talking about a five year old camera, and sophisticated electronics are not known for trouble-free longevity. Still, this camera is almost identical to its successor, with similar features. (The GS400 was improved with slightly larger sensors, 3 at 1/4 against 3 at 1/6, and a few improved features including low-light performance). I decided to risk it and look for one. And one appeared.

A PV-DV953 was listed on eBay. The description said it had been lightly used and came with a camera bag, all original cables and accessories plus a camera mounted light, a wide angle and telephoto lense, 2 batteries, 6 miniDV tapes, a lens cleaning kit, and a memory card for still shots. It looked good so I made a bid. I had some competition but eventually I won it, for \$400, a lot less than I had expected. I congratulated myself.

Less than a week later it arrived and I was delighted. Apart from a few minor scruff marks on the body, it looked almost brand new. At about three and a half pounds it has a lot

VIEWFINDERS CLUB REFRESHMENT SCHEDULE

With the club's thanks to those who provided refreshments for 2008 meetings to date.

January 9th, Wed.	Fred Pfof	June 4th, Wed.	Dick Brownlie
February 12th, Tues.	Bob Meacham	July 8th, Tues.	Irv Webster
March 11th, Tues.	Brian Lucas	August 12th, Tues.	Gordon Peterson
April 8th, Tues.	Jack Gorham	September 9th, Tues.	Janet Holl
May 7th, Wed.	John Dietrich	October 7th, Tues.	Mary Johnson
		November 5th, Wed.	Stan Smith

MEET OUR NEW MEMBER Milt Kostner

Milt is interested in video making as a hobby and expects to improve his skills through joining the Viewfinders Club. As well as family and travel movies, Milt also wants to use the hobby for public support programs.

Welcome to the club, Milt.



More Equipment to Raffle:

A camera hard case and a projector screen

Again, courtesy of Viewfinders member Fred Pfost, these two items can be won at the August club meeting. Also, Fred has a ton of **VHS tapes** that he'd be happy to sell for a dollar each, the money going to the club. Do yourself a favor and the club too by helping the club to build its funds.



more heft than my JVC point and shooter. There was going to be a lot to learn if I wanted to master all the advanced features this new camera sported, but that was why I bought it in the first place. Basic automatic settings makes for simple shooting, as it is on most camcorders, so I took it out to the back yard in this mode for an initial first test. Disaster! The video had a very strong greenish cast. I checked the menus; maybe the camera had some settings turned on that affected the video quality. I could find nothing. Now it began to dawn on me, the camera had a fault and that was why it was up for sale on eBay. It looked like the previous owner had decided to dump it rather than pay for repairs.

Gloomily I went back to the computer to check the camcorder user sites on the web and found that Panasonic charged a flat fee of \$260 for any repair. Do I return the camera to the seller or bite the bullet and send it to Panasonic for repair? I really wanted this camera but with shipping and repair costs it would no longer be the bargain I thought I had. And it was an old camera, what other problems were waiting to surface just down the road? I decided to call Panasonic technical help and hear what they might suggest about the green cast.

I've read some pretty nasty letters from angry camcorder owners about their dealings with manufacturer's tech support departments. "Unhelpful", "rude", "no response", "put on hold for ever" and so forth were words and phrases frequently used. My experiences have generally been quite good. My JVC camcorder that I have been using to date was a middle of the line miniDV camera that sold for around \$600 in 2005. I bought mine as a refurbished unit for about \$350 and it served me well, with a sharp clear picture, clean colors, good low light ability, and a single CCD. It

has minimal manual controls however, and no jacks for an auxiliary mike, phones, etc. Then one day something started to go wrong. I'd get a "Remove Lens Cap" message when the lens cap was off and the camera would freeze up. Turning it on and off a few times would get it to work but the problem became more frequent. I called JVC. It turned out that this was a JVC recall problem, a bunch of bad sensors, and JVC's technical support person was helpful in explaining what I needed to do to return it for a free repair. I did so and the camera was fixed and returned to me in less than two weeks. Pretty good service, I thought.

The lady at Panasonic listened to my description of the green cast on the Panasonic camera and agreed that it was not a menu adjustment problem but definitely a mechanical one and the camera needed repair. Panasonic had a flat charge for any repair but it was \$130, not the \$260 reported on camcorder users web sites. I thanked the lady and hung up. It looked like I was in for a repair charge but the out-of-pocket damage was less than I had supposed. A few minutes later the phone rang. It was the lady from Panasonic. After talking to me she had made a further investigation into my camera model and serial number and found that these cameras had been recalled back in 2004 for this same problem, faulty sensors, and I could get the camera repaired for free! I had already told her that I was not the original buyer but it didn't matter apparently. I was delighted and also very surprised that Panasonic would still honor its recall notice on a five year old camera. Not only the repair would be free, Panasonic also sent me pre-paid shipping labels for the return to the factory. Well done Panasonic. If all goes well, I'll be shooting with the Panasonic in a week or two from now. ■

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR JULY 2008

Bank Account Beginning 7/1/08 \$ 915.45
 Income Total: \$ 22.00
 Raffle (12 tickets) \$ 12.00
 Donation \$ 10.00
 Expenses Total: \$ 53.91
 Prod. Grp. Food \$ 53.91

 Bank Account Ending 7/31/08 \$ 883.54



Frank Swanson, Treasurer

Sudoku Puzzle Answer

V	O	M	S	E	I
S	E	I	V	O	M
M	I	S	E	V	O
E	V	O	I	M	S
I	M	E	O	S	V
O	S	V	M	I	E

TECH TIPS

By Frank Swanson

At our July general meeting I screened the *Digital Juice* "Avoiding Faulty Fonting" video explaining how formatting fonts is easy if you know a few simple rules. There are five aspects of titles and graphics that you create to help you avoid the most common titling mistakes:

1. Be Bold: The most important aspect of any title is readability. Make sure you choose a type face that's big, bold and easy to read. All editing applications have tons of fonts to choose



from and it can be a chore to look through all of them for the right font for your movie. But certain type faces are better than others for display on your TV. Fonts that are thin or swirly can be hard to read, especially for certain letters. If your viewer has to think too hard or to look too closely to read your text, then you've lost their attention and you've missed the mark. It's always better to go for big and bold instead of small and swirly. If it's something important enough to illustrate on your screen with text, then it needs to be presented clean, clear and legible.

2. Choose Colors That Contrast: It's important to pick a font color that contrasts well with your background. White text on a light colored background or dark text on a dark background are what we call low contrast. If character color and background are too close it's hard to read the text. Just choosing a dark font for a light background increases the contrast and the readability improves immensely.

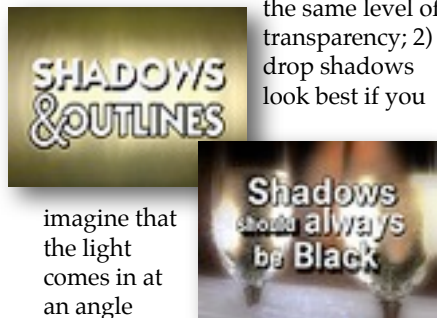
White text on a dark background is almost always OK (e.g. credits at the end of movies). Dark text on a white background is fine in terms of contrast but is hard on a viewer's eyes. Some colors should be avoided at all times:



stay away from bright fluorescent green or

pepto pink and watch out for red as the edges tend to bleed and look bad on the screen.

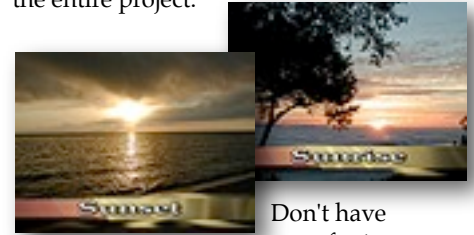
3. Go Deep: When used properly drop shadows and outlines add depth and interest to your titles. Drop shadows and outlines are great ways to pop your text off the background. They create separation and depth. Text without a shadow seems to be on the same layer as the background itself, while text with a shadow seems to float in front of the background. Keep a couple things in mind when you add shadows to your text: 1) make sure all your shadows fall in the same direction and have about



the same level of transparency; 2) drop shadows look best if you

imagine that the light comes in at an angle above the frame. The most common shadow angle is down and to the right. When it comes to color, outlines can be pretty much any color you want. Just make sure you stick with a color that's in the NTSC safe range. Shadows on the other hand, should always be black or gray. Remember that a shadow creates the illusion that the letters are blocking a light source.

4. Be Consistent: If your project uses multiple pages or graphics with text, "be wise to template". Pick a look you like and stick with it throughout the entire project.



Don't have your fonts change size, color, position or style from page-to-page or shot-to-shot. The key to looking professional is consistency. To avoid errors, copy and paste your original and use it as the foundation for each new graphic.

5. Be Brief: Avoid long sentences or paragraphs. Hit the highlights, emphasize key points, and move on. No matter how nice you format your fonts, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. Unless you need to type out a disclaimer or a quote, keep your text treatments short and sweet. You can accomplish the same goal more effectively by summarizing key points in a short list. If you absolutely have to provide a lot of text, it's best to have a narrator read it verbatim. Long titles ac-



companied by silence make viewers really uncomfortable.

Now, when you start working with text in your next movie production, keep these five tips in mind. In the end you just need to apply one simple rule for every title and graphic: each should support, not distract, the main message of the production. See this Tech Tip at www.digitaljuice.com and search with the words "faulty fonting". There are a whole bunch of other great instructional videos from Digital Juice to watch while you're there. I'll pick another one for screening at our next meeting, so be sure to come and learn something new. ■

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Viewfinder Newsletter is published during the third week of each month for Viewfinders Digital Video 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.

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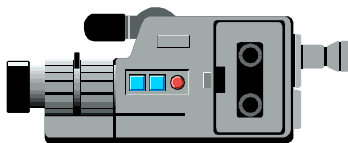
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS
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<p>JAN 9th, Wed. (Cupertino City Hall) Meeting: AMPS 2007 Contest winning videos screened Tech-Tips: "Shoot to Edit" Frank Swanson</p>	<p>FEB 12th, Tuesday Meeting: "How to Make a Digital Slide Show" by Jim Visser. Tech-Tips: "Sound Advice" Frank Swanson</p>
<p>MARCH 11th, Tuesday Meeting: Andy Panizza of Pinnacle Systems demonstrates "Studio Ultimate" Tech-Tips: "Animating Text" Frank Swanson</p>	<p>APRIL 8th, Tuesday Meeting: "Road" Theme Challenge screening Tech-Tips: "Through the Window" Frank Swanson</p>
<p>MAY 7th, Wednesday Meeting: Club Members Movie Night Tech-Tips: "Selling It with Sound" Frank Swanson</p>	<p>JUNE 4th, Wednesday Meeting: Panel Discussion "Adding Effects" with Bob Meacham, John Dietrich, Frank Swanson (for Mary Johnson) and Brian Lucas Tech-Tips: "King Cut" Frank Swanson</p>
<p>JULY 8th, Tuesday Meeting: Nimitz Grade School Videos Tech-Tips: "Faulty Fonting" Frank Swanson</p>	<p>AUG 12th, Tuesday Meeting: "What's New in HD" by Jason Housel of Snader and Associates Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>SEPT 9th, Tuesday Meeting: "Shooting Underwater Video" - Guest speaker Mike Boom Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>OCT 7th, Tuesday Meeting: Club Annual Video Contest screening Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>NOV 5th, Wednesday Meeting: Annual Gold DVD Awards and Social Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>DECEMBER No meeting this month</p>