

*Next Club Meeting: Wednesday, August 12th, 2009.
7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Cupertino Room,
Quinlan Center, 10185 N. Stelling Rd.,
Cupertino, CA*



IN THIS ISSUE: AUGUST 2009

Students Screen Their Movies

Susan Woods and children entertain Viewfinders again. Pages 1 and 2

President's Message

Time to choose a new board and looking for suggestions for next year's programs. Page 3

Product Review: Audacity

Brian Lucas finds this audio editing program to his liking. Page 3

Cinequest Competition

A chance for screenwriters to get their story produced. Page 4

"Interrogation" - A Great Day's Shoot

Viewfinders Video Production Group works on the new 2009 production. Page 5

Tech Tips

Frank Swanson on making depth of field a way to add impact to movies. Page 6

June Meeting
Highlights

Nimitz Grade School Movies

Once again the children of Cupertino's Nimitz Grade School arrived at our July club meeting with their entertaining movies of the year.

Tech Tips

"Focus" Using Depth of Focus to enhance one's movies by Frank Swanson

August Meeting

Club Member's Movies

Members - We'd like a full evening of movies so please bring your latest or best videos to the meeting to screen, share, and discuss.

Nimitz Kids Do It Again



It was touch an go whether they would appear as Viewfinders Club president Fred Pfof desperately scrambled to contact **Susan Woods** the previous week. Susan is the teacher at Nimitz who instigated the video program at her school. Fortunately Susan did get the message, although at the last moment, and, quickly springing into action rounded up her students and their parents arrived at the club meeting so as not to disappoint us.

Susan is particularly proud of her children this year as 23 of the movies achieved semi-finalist positions, five finalists and and one winning position against 150 entrants in this year's

contest sponsored by the Cupertino Education Endowment Foundation (CEEF). Well done Susan and children.

The children's movies were shown in the following order:

"How to Make a Model Volcano Erupt" by **Kyle Burris**

Assisted by his friend Connor Lydon, Kyle demonstrated

how a few household cleaning and cooking items placed in a model volcano, constructed of newspaper and



Continued page 2

Plaster of Paris, can produce an awesome replica of the real thing.



"How to Cook Spaghetti" by **Alina Lopez**. If cooking spaghetti correctly escapes you, this video demonstration should put you right.

Alina shows precisely the ingredients, cooking steps and timing to ensure just the right texture, not too soft or firm to exclaim, as Alina says, "Bon Appetite."

notable cities. On the tour Nir illustrates and describes the principal landmarks of each city which adds a quick history lesson on what these places mean to their occupants.



"Coelacanth" by **Bruce Chen**. This curious and ancient fish had been long considered extinct by science until discovered off

the coast of South Africa where they still survive. The fish had previously been identified only by fossils so the discovery shook the world's scientific community. What else is out there?



"History of the Olympic Games" by **Eran Naveh**. The Games have existed in separate stages, from the earliest in ancient Greece, to

a reemergence in 1896 in the form of the International Olympics committee and limited to amateur athletes. Today, over 200 countries send their athletes to the quadri-annual event says Eran.



"Icebergs" by **Noah Tsou**. Noah says that these towers of ice can weigh up to 200,000 tons and can be dangerous to ship-

ping, as in the *Titanic* disaster. He illustrated his movie with gorgeous photos of these ice mountains which act like giant crystals and, like rainbows, display the colors of the spectrum.



"Green Sea Turtles" by **Shely Stepanov**. These animals are as old as the dinosaurs says Shely. While they can stay underwater

for two hours they need to return to the surface to breathe. Their thick shells protect them though oddly they cannot withdraw their heads

like tortoises, nor, at about 25 years do they live as long.

"Pollution" by **Sanika Sahasrabudhe**. There are various forms of pollution such as light, water and air. Sanika's movie tackles the latter. She asks us to do our part to stop it and offers solutions which include driving low emission cars, walking, bicycling, and recycling instead of incinerating.



"My Great Movie About the Sun" by **Yuval Hermalin**.

Our sun is a pretty impressive star says Yuval. It is a giant nuclear furnace with a temperature of 27 million degrees fahrenheit which warms our planet and provides light and energy for plants to use. It might not look very big in the sky but it's over a million times bigger than Earth.



"Stars" by **Taylor Aller**. Our sun is a star says Taylor, one among billions. Stars are born in clouds of dust called nebulae.

When a star is bright it is in the middle of its lifetime and grows bigger and redder. Eventually it is so big it collapses and becomes a tiny white dwarf, but it takes a long time.



"Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith" by **Yonaton Besser**.

in a re-staging of the movie, Yonaton directs actor friends Michael Penny-packer and Taehyun playing Obi Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader who fight it out with light sticks over desks and tables in his school. But never fear, the boys epic struggle ends with good triumphing over evil.



Congratulations to Susan Woods and her all-stars. We look forward to next year's productions. ■

"Cooking at Ease" by **Roe** demonstrates how to make a coconut cake. Roe acts as the presenter and knows his way around a kitchen. He begins by listing the

ingredients, including quantities, preheats the oven and bakes. One could almost smell the aroma of his creation.



"How to Play Wii Bowling" by **Noa Gal**. This computer game, one of Wii sports disks provides a virtual bowling alley. Noa demonstrates the set-up and

controls of the game and then shows us how to play, ably assisted by her sister Dana on camera.



"Global Warming" by **Anne He**. As this phenomena has now been accepted as a fact and declared a danger to our planet's future, Anne has some ideas on what

children can do to reduce the problem which includes walking to school, using lunch boxes rather than lunch bags and drying clothes on a washing line. Pretty cool ideas.



"14 Famous American Cities" by **Nir Shukrun**. Nir presented us with a whirlwind slideshow tour of the country's most



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is that time of year to start thinking about next year's officers and monthly programs. Please submit your name for any office you would like to run for. Brian Lucas wants to step down from the secretary position but will continue writing the newsletter which he has been doing so well for three or so years now. Brian

would like some help in writing and editing the newsletter which would make it a lot easier and less time consuming for him. Please let me or Brian know if you can help. Thank you, Brian, for all of your contributions to the board as well as the newsletter.

I am stepping down from the presidency and Jack Gorham, who is presently our vice president, has indicated that he will run for the office of president. Milt Kostner has agreed to run for the vice president position. Frank Swanson, who has been our outstanding treasurer for many years is willing to return again as candidate for treasurer. So we need a volunteer for the position of secretary, whose duties are to handle any correspondence for the club, attend board meetings and to help Brian with the gathering of information about the meetings.

The other unsolved problems for next year are the subjects to be presented at each month's meeting. We have always reserved a few months for scheduled activities such as Theme Challenge, Member Movies, Nimitz Grade School Videos, Club Members Annual Video Contest. We try to show submitted member videos each month as time allows and the annual Gold DVD awards and Social in November. Plus, Frank Swanson provides us with Tech Tips each month.

Please let me know of any ideas you have for programs and maybe we can add them to next year's schedule. We would like to have the whole year's programs in place by November.



Audacity

An audio editor for the rest of us

Some weeks ago I began a project I've had in mind for several years but was uncertain how to proceed. The visual aspect, several dozen slides shot in the 1970's I can manipulate with Photoshop but the audio recording captured with a simple cassette recorder of the period was far less than perfect. How to improve it? I think I've found the answer.

Audacity is a popular cross-platform open source audio editor. It's free and downloadable. The program is constantly being improved and expanded by volunteers and is used by a large and satisfied following. The pdf manual that comes with it is just OK but there are dozens of tutorials and tips all over the web which I have found to be excellent. So far the program seems pretty complete for the admittedly simple clean-up and improvement tasks I have been doing,

Continued page 4

**Viewfinders
PICTURE
PUZZLE**

Crew scene for shoot of new club movie "The Interrogation"

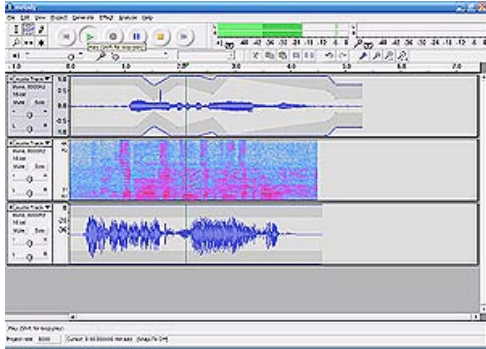
This scene with John Dietrich and Herb Wolff setting-up the camcorder in preparation for the shoot has had a makeover with ten changes. Can you spot them all?



The answers are on the back page of this newsletter.

Audacity, continued

incorporating tools like cut, copy and paste, noise removal, track mixing, compression, and a helpful spectrogram. The program can however be made extremely powerful by using the many specialized plug-ins available, many of them free.



Getting to grips with the program was made difficult for me as I have an almost non-existent knowledge of sound terms. (E.g. Chorus: a Delay for which the delay time is modulated by an LFO. Huh?) However I now feel much more confident that after my current project is completed I won't be so intimidated by the whole business of messing about with poor or lackluster audio recordings.

As I progress I'll contribute follow-up articles to this short introduction but don't wait. You can learn about this editor and download your own copy by going to www.audacity.soundforge.net

Brian Lucas

CINEQUEST

SCREENWRITING COMPETITION

The following is an abridgment of an article on Cinequest's web site. Viewfinder members with writing talents may wish to go online to discover more about the competition.

A SCREENWRITER completes the online entry for his soon-to-be "buzzed" about screenplay and sends the information off to Cinequest's Screenwriting Competition, where it will be met with an enthusiastic team ready to discover captivating storytelling and transform dreams into reality.

The Cinequest Screenwriting Competition is a MUST for any screenwriter, as winners of the competition have experienced getting their scripts made and read by many of the most influential industry players from top companies.

DEADLINE: October 9, 2009

Top Prize: USD \$5,000

2nd Prize

- A one-on-one consulting session with award-winning playwright and screenwriter Hal Ackerman, Co-

Chairman of the UCLA Screenwriting Program, and author of *Write Screenplays That Sell...The Ackerman Way*.

- *Screenwriting: Beyond the Basics*. Sitting around a conference table, you will join an exclusive roundtable with legendary UCLA Screenwriting Chairman, Prof. Richard Walter, who will recreate the authentic film school experience. He'll analyze script pages written by some of the class participants, show you how professionals really judge scripts, and send you home with a solid grasp of the unfailing principles of successful screenwriting. Included: a follow up reading of your entire screenplay, lunch with Prof. Walter, and a copy of his book.

Please reference our website for a full list of prizes for the Top 10 Winners.

To submit screenplays please visit: www.cinequest.org/sp_enroll.php

CLUB MEETINGS REFRESHMENTS VOLUNTEERS

The club thanks those who will or have provided refreshments

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Jan. 14th, Wed. | Fred Pfof |
| Feb. 11th, Wed. | Janet Holl |
| March 11th, Wed. | Bernie Wood |
| April 8th, Wed. | Brian Lucas |
| May 13th, Wed. | |
| June 10th, Wed. | Bill Mannion |
| July 8th, Wed. | Gordon Peterson |
| Aug 12th, Wed. | Glenn Mooty |
| Sept 9th, Wed. | Jim Visser |
| Oct 14th, Wed. | Janet Holl |
| Nov 4th, Wed. | Bob Meacham |
| December | - No meeting |

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR JULY 2009

Bank Account Beginning 07/01/09	\$997.11
Income Total:	\$30.00
New Members (1) \$30	
Expenses Total:	\$0.00
Bank Account Ending 07/31/09	\$1027.11



JOIN THE VIEWFINDERS CLUB NOW!

Bring your check or cash to our August 12th meeting to join the Viewfinders for the rest of this year. The current pro-rated annual dues for the rest of this year are \$14 for individuals, \$17 for families, and \$5 for full-time students. Make your checks payable to the "Viewfinders Club".

Frank Swanson, Treasurer

Successful Shoot of VVP's "The Interrogation"

By Milt Kostner

Last Saturday the crew of the Viewfinders Video Production gathered in The South Bay Historical Railroad Society's Santa Clara Rail Depot Museum to set up the sets for "The Interrogation". On the following Sunday, the crew finished the lighting and when the actors arrived, completed all A-roll scene takes. With Bob Meacham's final script and shot list completed prior to this activity, the approximately 75 takes of 25 scenes took an effort of about eleven hours through both days. And this activity was sand-

might have been in an earlier date deferred shoot date that was predicted at 104 degrees. While the crew

16:9 image ratio specified for this video. Another first for the production crew was the use of Adobe OnLocation on a laptop to save takes to its Digital Video Recorder software, allowing crew and actor review of any clip without rerolling tape in the camera. The saved clips serve as a backup for the camera tape recording. A demo of this powerful software will be presented at VF at a future meeting. ■



(Bob Meacham, Director, Herb Wolff, Camera, John Dietrich, Lighting, Brian Lucas, Sound, Jack Gorham, Editor and Milt Kostner, Production Manager) was able to exist in minimal clothing, the actors (**Gregory Bonds, Steamer II, and Genny Laurie** had to suffer in more formal attire (ties!). No sweat! Or was it great floods of sweat and Gator Aide?

wiched in between 26 passing trains on the adjacent track and buses from three routes passing about every 15 minutes.



It was 95 degrees hot outside and hotter inside; but not as hot as it

Herb's camera body is limited to 4:3 image ratio but for the first time for VVP he used his "anamorphic" lens to generate the



Photos - Clockwise from top center: 1. An overview of the set built by Milt Kostner and Scott McLaughlin, designed by Bob Meacham. 2. Screenshot of Milt's "OnLocation" software. 3. Herb Wolff and Scott McLaughlin at camera. 4. Bob Meacham directs his actors. 5. The cast take a break from the heat. 6. John Dietrich checks his lighting on the monitor with Bob and soundman Brian Lucas.

All photos courtesy of Milt Kostner

TECH TIPS

By Frank Swanson

Ever noticed in television shows and movies that when the camera is focused on a nearby subject that the background is blurred and/or not in focus? Have you ever wondered why this effect is used a lot in movies? And, do you know how to use your camcorder to obtain this effect? Well, this Tech-Tip, based upon Digital Juice's "Production Notes: Focusing for Effect" video, will attempt to explain the answers to these last two questions.

There are many factors that come into play when composing a good-looking shot. One technique that is common in the world of videography and cinematography is making use of "depth-of-field" or manipulating your exposure and lens settings so that your subject is in a crisp focus and your background falls to a dream-like blur. There are only a few simple steps to take to achieve this effect.

As a camera operator the easiest thing to do when shooting a scene is just set-up your camera, lock-down your tripod on the subject, and start shooting. Although it does the job, the footage you're recording is probably not very appealing. The background could be a bit distracting because it's probably in focus. Hence your subject loses the attention he or she deserves.



You can improve the look of your subject by making some minor adjustments to the way you shoot – the way you use your camera. By selecting the areas in the frame that you want in and out of focus will make the shot and the subject more appealing for the viewer. The factors that make-up the depth-of-field are your *lens setting* and an *aperture setting*.



A wide-angle lens and a smaller aperture (or larger f-stop setting like f:16) will give you a greater area around your subject that is in focus. A longer lens (or telephoto setting) and a wide-open aperture (or smaller f-stop setting like f:1.8) will give you a very shallow depth of field and this is good. Now you can choose what you want in focus in the frame.

Here's how you do it: 1) move your camera back as far as you can from your subject, 2) zoom-in to compose your subject as you want in your frame, and 3) focus your subject in the center of the frame. If your subject is in the center of the frame, auto-focus will work just fine to keep your subject



clear and the background will appear fuzzy. If your subject is not centered in the frame (e.g. for those shots where your subject is looking to the left or right), you'll need to use your camera's manual focus mode to achieve the desired result.

If you want to drop that background even further out of focus, you'll need a camera with iris control. By opening the iris as wide as possible you will obtain a very shallow depth of

field, but this will blowout your image (e.g. overexpose your subject and the background). So now you have to cut-down the amount of light coming into the camera. This can be achieved with a neutral-density [ND] filter. These filters come with various shades of gray that don't alter the colors of the light that comes through the lens. The darker the filter the more light you're going to cut out entering the lens. Think of ND filters as a camera's sunglasses. Some cameras have built-in ND filters and some permit attachment of screw-on ND filters. If you have neither of these, an inexpensive pair of regular sunglasses



with gray tint glass

will also work by taping one glass to the front of your camera lens. Well, there you have it. By implementing this simple technique you'll improve the look of your composition. And the best thing is you can apply this technique using your camcorder or your digital camera to make those good shots of your subject even greater. The next time you get out your camera, give this Tech-Tip a try and you'll be amazed at how easy it is to take another step forward in improving your camera shooting technique. When you watch TV next time, pay close attention to when this technique is used as it's used more often than you think. This Tech-Tip can be seen live on your computer by going to www.digitaljuice.com at their DJTV series. I'll select a new tech tip for screening at our next meeting, so be sure to come and learn something new. ■



CREDITS

Editor and Publisher: Brian Lucas
lucasbouret@sbcglobal.net

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. 10185 N. Stelling Road, Cupertino, California. Watch the calendar for programs updates. Guest admission is free.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

- \$30 for individuals
- \$35 for families
- \$5 for full-time students

OFFICERS

President: Fred Pfof
fpfof@aol.com

Vice President: Jack Gorham
jack_g93@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Frank Swanson
frank_video29@swansonhome.com

Secretary: Brian Lucas
lucasbouret@sbcglobal.net

WEBSITE

www.viewfindersclub.org

Picture Puzzle Answers

1. 6D - Red cooler now green
2. 3E - John's left sock has grown
3. B4 - Picture on the wall is missing
4. 1E - The computer stand has an extra leg on the floor
5. C4 - Herb's watch is missing
6. C7 - Pink water bottle is bigger
7. A3 - John not wearing glasses now
8. A5 - Extra set of notices on the wall
9. D4 - Red cord on the floor missing
10. C6 - Second green 7-UP can on the counter

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2009

JAN 14th, Wednesday

Meeting: AMPS 2008 Contest winning videos screened

FEB 11th, Wednesday

Meeting: Presentation on the Theory of Light and Video Lighting: Fred Pfof and John Dietrich
Tech-Tips: "Cutting Room Floor"

MARCH 11th, Wednesday

Meeting: What you need to know about White Balance and High Definition Video by Fred Pfof, Franz Helbig and Milt Kostner
Tech-Tips: "I've Been Framed"

APRIL 8th, Wednesday

Meeting: "Theme Challenge- Coast"" screening night.
Hi-Def Cameras Overview by Milt Kostner

MAY 13th, Wednesday

Meeting: Club Members Movie Night
Physics of Sound and Sound Editing by Fred Pfof and Bob Meacham

JUNE 10th, Wednesday

Meeting: Panel discussion "DVD Authoring" with Mary Johnson, John Dietrich and Frank Swanson
Tech-Tips: "Shoot to Edit"

JULY 8th, Wednesday

Meeting: Nimitz Grade School Videos
Tech-Tips: "Focus"

AUGUST 12th, Wednesday

Meeting: Club Members Movies Night
Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson

SEPTEMBER 9th, Wednesday

Meeting: Guest speaker TBD
Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson

OCTOBER 14th, Wednesday

Meeting: Club Annual Video Contest screening
Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson

NOVEMBER 4th, Wednesday

Meeting: Annual Gold DVD Awards and Social
Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson

DECEMBER

No meeting this month

BLANK PAGE