

Next Club Meeting:
 * **Wednesday, April 11th, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.**
 Cupertino Room, Quinlan Center,
 10185 N. Stelling Rd., Cupertino, CA



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March 2012 Meeting

Highlights

Narration for Movie Makers

It can be a challenge to shoot and edit a stand-out video but for many of us, recording a good audio narration track can be an even more daunting business. So we looked forward to hearing Dana Marks, a professional voice actor, local resident and voice of "Radio Cupertino 1670 AM", address us at the March meeting. The program was produced by Bill Mannion, who had read an article about Dana in the newspaper, and invited him to describe his profession and advise us on how we can improve our own narrative tracks.

Wednesday April 11th Meeting

Audio Sweetening / Fixing

Expert teacher in Family & Travel Video Production, **Chet Davis** takes a look at options for improving audio quality using computer software like *Audacity* and *Sound Soap*. Examples of sound editing with these programs will be demonstrated.

The Importance of Audio Narration to Capture and Hold Viewers Attention

By Dana Marks, Voice Actor



The following is a condensation of Dana's talk. A DVD of the whole presentation, including recorded narration examples and questions and answers from the audience was shot by Gordon Peterson and edited by Frank Swanson. It is available from the club's library. Also, Dana's Powerpoint presentation and an audio recording of the meeting can be found on the club's website: viewfindersclub.org on the Meetings page. More can be found at Dana's own website at: danamarksvoice.com

ABOUT DANA

Dana introduced himself and explained his background. For 20 years he had been a Silicon Valley marketing executive. working with major companies including Hewlett-

Packard, IBM, Oracle and other High tech start-up companies. Years of giving business presentations, which earned him high "Marks" for the quality of his voice, propelled him into the profession of voice actor which he has pursued for the last four years. His industry background has brought him work for High Tech assignments as well as voice acting jobs for promotional and public announcement contracts and commercials.

VOICE NARRATION TODAY

Before the Internet era the voice actor needed to live in a major city where sophisticated recording studios were based. For TV and film work this meant either New York or Los Angeles and therefore the number of pro-

Continued page 2

Audio narration, from page 1

professionals was quite small. But with the advent of the Internet whereby the voice actor can set up a home studio and email his recordings to a client, the field has grown considerably. It has now become a very competitive field where only about two out of ten actors are hired for 80 percent of the work. The first ten seconds of a demo recording is critical in that if it does not hold the attention of the client it is stopped and rejected.

ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

Audiences learn new things either visually by what they see, auditory by what they hear or kinetically through other senses.

Most people need to hear a message three times before it registers in the mind for immediate recollection. Some people will need to see as well as hear something new to register it, while others may need to be physically involved in some way to learn. These things need to be considered when planning an audio narration.

STORYTELLING IN MOVIES

In the early days of silent film the film maker had limited tools to tell his story, which were mostly visual. The action of the camera, his actors gestures and worded inter-titles. A piano could be employed to provide mood. Once "talkies" arrived the story could be better advanced through dialog, recorded music, sound effects and a voice over narration.

VOICES ON FILM

Roles for voice actors can include the following examples:

Instructor for educational productions, *Spokesperson* for corporate or institutional films, *Narrator* for documentaries and *Announcer* for radio and TV shows

THE ROLE OF THE NARRATOR

The work of the narrator is important in a movie to set the scene, introduce the characters and provide insights into the characters and scenes that cannot be shown through action and dialog. (Dana provided examples of this from the opening scenes of Orson Well's film "Citizen Kane" and Woody Allen's "Take the Money and Run" In

both cases a minute or two of narration and visuals encapsulated many years in the life of the protagonists.)

The narrator may be the voice of a "first person" - one of the characters in the story. Or, as "third person" - an objective witness to the events and people in the story. The voice over may also be the thoughts of the character we see on the screen which the actor cannot vocalize, or the words printed in a message or book, etc. A narration may also be deceptive with the intent to fool the audience until a truth may be revealed.

VOICE OVER TECHNIQUES AND MARKETS

Different qualities and styles of voice have become identified with particular genres of film, radio, television, commercial and announcements. The voice actor may specialize in one or more of these categories which might include product demo videos, educational videos, audio books, public and retail store announcements, documentaries, animation features, et al.*

DANA'S RESPONSE TO MEMBER'S QUESTIONS

- Getting into character to do a voice over is important. Whether a first person or a third person narration, the voice actor needs to know what relationship he or she has to the story being told.
- Fit the time allotted to the narration precisely. This is particularly important for a commercial assignment but also a very good discipline to develop in the amateur video maker.
- Microphone choice. Dana works with and prefers to narrate directly into the computer using a USB type microphone.
- Ambient noise is the enemy. Find a quiet area in the house and fill it with sound deadening objects such as pillows and cushions. (Acoustic foam panels may be purchased from Internet merchants.) Position one's mouth close to the microphone to reduce resonance - the hollow sound most noticeable in an empty room.
- Place a "Pop Screen" between the microphone and one's lips. This sim-

ple device can be purchased or made from a wire coat hanger bent into a ring and covered with a piece of old panty hose. It will reduce or eliminate "plosives", the popping sound picked up by sensitive mikes from lip and tongue movement.

- Working extemporarily (without a script) by just watching the movie and adding narration to the audio track is possible but likely to need more retakes before a satisfactory take is recorded.
- Voice training classes are available and may be a requirement for the serious voice actor.
- Recording a narration directly to the camera while shooting will almost certainly require audio editing software to clean up undesirable ambient noise, the inevitable umms and errs and stumbles over words and pronunciation.

When the Cupertino Courier interviewed Dana for the newspaper article, Dana said,

"Have I done something that will make someone take action to improve themselves, protect themselves or make their lives easier or better in some way? If I have, then that's a good feeling."

He certainly did something for us at the March Viewfinders meeting. Now it is up to us to take advantage of his knowledge and experience as a voice actor and apply it to our own productions. ■



FREE LENS CLEANING KITS!

For 2012 club members

Purchased by Treasurer Frank Swanson, the kit contains a 1 oz. bottle of cleaning fluid with a green mosaic hi-tech micro-fiber cloth. Effectively cleans all lens types, including cameras, without streaking or smearing.

A very useful package to keep in one's camcorder bag

Scott Budman and the "Tech Now" Show Tour

A VISIT TO THE TECH MUSEUM

By Frank Swanson and Fred Pfof

At 9 A.M. on the morning of March 29, 2012, six Viewfinders members met at Quinlan Center to form car pools for a trip to the Tech Museum in San Jose. The purpose was to observe a recording session of one of Scott Budman's "Tech Now" programs that airs every Saturday night at 6:30 P.M. on the NBC television station KNTV channel 11 (or 3 on cable).

Scott recorded his short 10-15 second introductory clips for each of the show's segments inside the



inside the

it's produced. Assisting him were two technicians who took care of the lighting, sound and camerawork (not tape, but memory chip recording). The camera and lights were all set up for his introductions to five different subjects. He had previously written fairly short comments on each segment and just before standing in front of the camera he refreshed in his mind the wording of the segment and then make his effusive delivery with great aplomb (like the real professional he is). We found it very interesting to watch how quickly Scott recorded his clips, one after the other, with just a few seconds before each one to read his pre-written notes - no teleprompter for this professional! It is a pleasure to be with Scott Budman



down in front of the camera and recorded a short interview which he may use some day. The interview also included a few promotional comments and display of a new Olympus digital sound recorder that Fred had with him (Model DM-620).

Remember that only members of the Viewfinders are eligible to attend these special one-time free events throughout the year. If you missed



At left Viewfinder member Diane Sparks questions Scott Budman. At right Scott interviews Fred Pfof. (See page 5 for entire tour group photo)

NASA exhibit "Destination Station". This is the only West Coast Appearance of this multimedia exhibit about the story behind the International Space Station. To allow for editing time each "Tech Now" show is broadcast on the Saturday that falls a week and a half after the recording session.

Before the recording began we were able to ask Scott questions about the "Tech Now" show, its history and how

because he makes one feel so comfortable with his friendly chatter and mannerisms.

When you watch the shows on television take note of Scott's smooth segues between the show's segments - a nice short technique that we could all use in our videos, especially for our voice-over travelogues.

The actual recording took about half an hour. Following that Scott sat Fred

this one, be sure to put the next one on your calendar!

Those who attended the tour were Frank Swanson, Glen Mooty, JoAnn Pfof, Diane Sparks, Fred Pfof and Aoyagi Keichi.

More photos can be found on our Club website: viewfindersclub.org ■

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Keep strong!

As Officers in our club one of the things we see that is not as obvious to the regular membership is the shrinking of similar clubs. Each year the number of social clubs across the US and Canada, including video oriented clubs like Viewfinders, diminishes. Viewfinders belongs to several larger organizations that host festivals and competitions that are open to the various video clubs around the country. And, each year we see less clubs are involved. However, Viewfinders is one of the strongest clubs on the West Coast with decent membership and lots of activities.

I have been asked a couple of times over the years what keeps Viewfinders going as strong as we do. My answer has always been simple; involved members. Our club strives to offer our members a host of learning opportunities, stimulating programs and a place to share their work. That all adds up to a reason to attend meetings, work to produce better videos and continue to be a part, a member, of Viewfinders.

So, where am I going with this? I am encouraging each of you to stay in-

involved by contributing to the club with your feedback, your input, sharing your videos and interacting with other members to share ideas and techniques. This is your club, help keep it strong!

On a different note, as we swing into Spring it is normal to feel the urge to do some spring cleaning. Now is actually a good time to go over your video gear and think about renewing/ updating/ replacing or refreshing your tools. As mentioned in other articles, things are changing in videography, and as the weather warms and the sun shines it stimulates the body and brain and makes learning new things easier. It is time to drag out the gear, dust it off and re-evaluate it for your future video needs. If you find you may want or need to replace something, you have a great resource in the other club members to ask questions and get suggestions. Use it. Stay Strong!

Making the Next Spielberg

Each year we invite the young videographers from Susan Woods' class at Nimitz School to show off their best work. This year we will again be seeing them at our May meeting. Taking the understanding that mentoring is the best way to help a young artist we decided to help these kids with guidance.

On February 16th three members of Viewfinders, Bill Mannion, Fred Pfost and myself, were invited into the classroom to help provide some helpful tips, suggestions, and in Fred's case, some audio equipment. The

plan was for each of us to cover a few of the different aspects of creating good videos.

I started the time off by discussing what makes a good documentary, how to develop a story line, the best techniques to use for interviews and how to mix recorded video with supplemental materials from the web or other resources. Bill then talked about the need for the onscreen talent or voice-over talent to use good diction, and to speak in a slow deliberate manner so that the voices come across loud and clearly. He pointed out that a good video can be hampered with poor audio. Fred then presented Ms. Woods and the class with several gifts, a wireless lavalier microphone with receiver and a small amplifier/speaker system. Fred demonstrated the hook-up and use of these in conjunction with the video camera he had donated to the class previously. He had several kids put on the wireless lav mic and go to remote areas to demonstrate its range. This equipment will help the kids create better audio for their videos.

All in all it was a wonderful visit, we shared a ton of information and you never know when one of these kids might become interested in making movies and become the next great creator. We will get to see the results of these efforts in May when we screen the best of the class videos.

Bob Meacham



Setting Up for a Sound Narration

Paying attention to a few basics can ensure a good voice-over job.



5. Wear headphones. They'll isolate the audio more efficiently than speakers to emphasize any audio problems.

RECORDING

1. Microphone position.

Set the microphone 6 to 12 inches from the mouth for a clear voice. Too close and you'll get a distorted clipping sound; too far and you pick up more ambient noise.

2. Avoid plosives (popping p's).

Buy or build a pop filter to sit in front of your mic to block out the pops. Many simple DIY plans can be found in the Internet. Or try speaking over the mic to avoid pushing air onto it.

3. Ambient sound and resonance.

To lower room resonance (the hollow sound) place a couple of pillows each side of the mic. Placing the mic in a box lined with foam is better. Listen and deal with unwanted ambient sounds from home appliances.

4. Make a test recording.

Make sure that everything is working correctly before getting down to business.

6. Your script should be easy to read.

Read it a few times to make sure it flows right and is placed conveniently. A printed script should have a large typeface and be well lit for easy reading.

7. Stand or sit while recording?

You'll feel more energized if you stand but If you do sit, don't slouch. Sit up straight and keep your chin out. Don't let it drop to your chest.

8. Don't ad-lib.

Write a polished script and stick with it. Ad-libbing will throw off your timing when editing and probably cause you to make multiple takes without common edit points.

9. Record 10 seconds of silence.

This allows sampling any ambient noise such as an air conditioner to filter out later. It may also be used to fill gaps of silence when editing.

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Viewfinders Web Site

viewfindersclub.org

Latest Updates

Home Page: See a link to our April meeting audio editing expert speaker Chet Davis's web-site.

About Us Page: See a YouTube link to the Bob Meacham-Phil Lenihan *Better Part* interview.

Meetings Page: Watch Bill Mannion's Gold DVD honorable mention movie "*A Russian is Coming*".

Download the short video loop "*Space Travel*", a nicely animated star field.

View and listen to Dana Marks March presentation on audio narration.

Productions Page: Click on past club video production titles to view excerpts.

Newsletter Page: Download all Viewfinders Newsletters since January 2007 with a list of selected articles.

Webmaster: **Frank Swanson**

PICTURE PUZZLE by Frank Swanson

Six Viewfinders Club members went to the San Jose Tech Museum in March to watch Scott Budman tape his *TechNow* show that appeared on NBC's Channel 3. There are 10 differences between these two pictures of us all just before the taping began. Can you spot all of them? The Answers are on page 8.



TECH TIPS

SHOOTING TIPS FOR THE AMATEUR VIDEOGRAPHER: Part 19 by Frank Swanson

Video Cutaways

How often have you seen videos that just don't flow smoothly from one shot to another, appear disjointed and are full of discontinuities? It happens more than you think, especially in videos produced by amateurs like us. The professionals that make television and theatre movies know what it takes to eliminate these problems. The trick is all in the cinematography, knowing what to show the audience and how to frame it. The article this month is all about the use of cutaways to provide for continuity, add depth and dimension, and keep your video rock solid, not to mention "save your bacon" in editing.

Why do filmmakers, television producers and professional videographers use cutaways? What is a cutaway anyway? A good understanding of the cutaway can elevate every video that we make to a higher standard. A cutaway is a shot of something related to but outside the main action of a scene. It's a shot that cuts away from the main action to a separate or secondary action – hence its name, cutaway. For instance, a shot of a Little League baseball batter standing up at the plate



ready to hit is followed by another one of the father or mother showing encouragement. Then back to the shot of the batter swinging at the pitched ball. In this instance, the cutaway also acts as a reaction shot – a shot of a subject's face to capture an emotional response.

1. Continuity and the Cutaway: In order to better understand the role of cutaways, we first need to understand

the notion of continuity: the state of being without interruption. Continuity, as it relates to videography, refers to maintaining believable and temporal relationships within a scene in such a way that shots you intend to put together actually fit together in a natural and seamless flow of action, preserving the illusion of reality on the screen. That's where continuity editing comes in.

Continuity editing is a term that refers to the actual arrangement of shots to produce a scene in which time and space seem to be uninterrupted, creating the illusion of reality. You maintain the fluidity of an action without showing all of it. To do otherwise would consume way too much screen time, not to mention bore your audience to death.

Let's take a look at the following example. A far shot of a man about to walk down some stairs is followed by



a close-up shot of his feet part way down, then finally ending with a close-up shot of him at the bottom. Although three shots make up the action, we expect the movement to flow or give the impression of flowing smoothly, like a single, continuous action.

One of the basic requirements of continuity (it could even be called the general rule) is to always change the size as well as the angle of shots that you intend to cut together within a scene. This will allow the shots to cut together smoothly. Continuity problems will arise if you don't maintain a smooth and coherent action.

One of the common problems to solve is the jump cut – an interrupted flow of action from one shot to the next. For example, if you cut from a shot of a man getting out of a car to a shot of him walking away from the car, without showing exactly how he got to that new position, you will produce a confusing jump in time. The cut will break the continuity of time. Maintaining and preserving continuity in your videos is of paramount importance.

2. Cutaways for Time Control: What are the instances in which we might want to use cutaways? The possibilities are endless. Use cutaways to solve continuity problems such as jump cuts. Sticking to the previous example, if we cut from the shot of the man getting



out of the car to a cutaway of the place he's planning to walk to, then back to the shot of him walking into the building, the cut will be smoother. The audience will fill in the gap, by assuming the man had plenty of time to get out of the car, shut and door and walk away to the building. With the cutaway we compressed time. Adding a sound effect of a car door closing during the cutaway will add even more believability.

3. Unspoken Words and the Cutaway:

Use cutaways to increase tension in your scenes. You automatically raise the stakes when you shoot a man getting out of his car, closing the door and walking away, then follow up with a cutaway of a set of dangling keys left behind, still in the ignition. The audience will have no problem coming to the appropriate conclusion that the man will be in trouble when he later returns to his car. Again, the cutaway creates the tension and drives the audience without unnecessary storytelling or dialog.



4. Linking Action and the Cutaway:

Do you ever need to break or link action in scenes? Use cutaways. Do you need to jump people around by moving them from place to



place, like at a birthday party? Use cutaways. Use them for suspense or excitement, to reveal information, to

Continued page 7

Tech Tips, cont. from page 6

smoothly join one part of a long speech at a meeting with another, to fix a second or two of a wedding toast when someone walks in front of your camera, even to confuse the audience. The list of cutaway uses can go on forever. When you're out at an event like a wedding, on a trip to a National Park, or just shooting footage of your grandchildren at home, choose cutaway shots that truly represent what the characters are feeling, thinking about or seeing – anything that serves the story, not just something you can use as a Band Aid to cover cuts. This is where the art of the cutaway truly lies: a momentary distraction of the audience to serve the story.

This article barely scratches the surface of what cutaways can do for you to improve the quality of your videos. When you watch television tonight or go out to a movie this weekend, look for the cutaways that the editor inserted into the story. Then, for your next movie, try to fully embrace cutaways, because they're wonderful and very useful editing tools. They allow greater flexibility in editing. ■

Narration, continued from page 5

USING AN AUDIO EDITOR

1. Be sure to use headphones.

This is the only way you'll be able to truly hear the recording (warts and all) versus the use of built-in PC speakers or cheap external speakers.

2. Compression

Using audio compression is an effective way to enhance the quality of voiceover recordings. Audio editors first measures the range of peaks and valleys in an audio clip, then narrows the range in volume throughout the audio clip. An additional benefit is that it can add punch to the narrator's voice.



Compression before and after

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR MARCH 2012

Bank Account Beginning 3/1/12 \$1503.60
 Income Subtotal: \$155.00
 Dues (5) \$150
 DVD Sales (1-MT): \$5
 Expenses Subtotal: \$0.00
 Bank Account Ending 3/31/12 \$1658.60



JOIN/RENEW YOUR CLUB MEMBERSHIP FOR 2012

The membership dues for 2012 are like last year: \$30 for individuals, \$35 for families and \$5 for full-time students. Bring your check or cash to our April meeting. Make checks payable to "Frank Swanson" with "Viewfinders Club Dues" on the memo line.

Frank Swanson

REFRESHMENTS VOLUNTEERS

The club thanks those who will or have provided refreshments. Please let Brian Lucas know which months you will be available to volunteer.

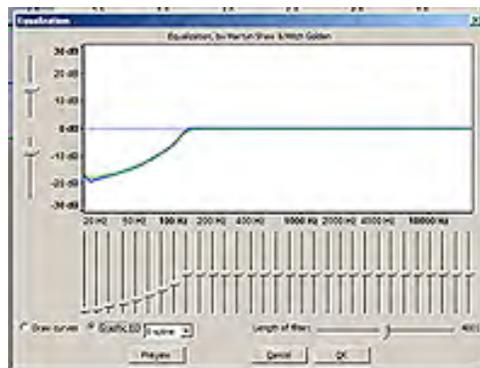
Jan 11th	Craig VonWaaden	July	Glenn Mooty & Milt Kostner
Feb 8th	JoAnn & Fred Pfof	August	Open
Mar 14th	Nancy Wood & Trixie Visser	September	Virginia Misoff & Gordon Peterson
Apr 11th	Linda Grodt & Brian Lucas	October	Open
May 9th	Open	November	Open
June 13th	Open		

One caveat about using compression: if the recording has a considerable amount of background noise, applying audio compression can raise its volume. So starting with well-recorded audio is important.

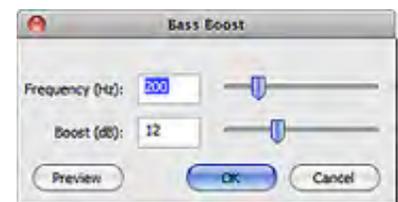
3. Add some bass.

Recordings encoded in the MP3 format reduce file sizes to a fraction of the original with a major hit to the

bass frequencies. A recording may sound tinny or washed out. Most audio editing applications, including the freeware Audacity, have a graphic equalizer function that will give you the ability to add the right amount of bass to your audio clips. Audacity also offers a bass boost feature as well. After applying bass to a file listen with your headphones. If it doesn't sound right, go back to the original and try it again with different bass settings. Although it may take a few minutes to find the correct bass adjustments, you'll obtain some improvement in the sound quality. ■



Graphic equalizer



Audacity bass booster

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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

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Picture Puzzle Answers from Page 5

- C1: Frank's shirt sprouted four white stripes
- E4: Fred left shoe doubled in size
- D2: Glenn put his right hand in his pocket
- D7: The truck in the building disappeared
- D4: Diane's shirt got shortened
- A4: Two extra overhead lights appeared
- D5: Keichi's hat in his left hand disappeared
- C4: Words on TV screen have disappeared
- E3: Scott Budman's left shoe has lengthened
- D6: The rope stanchion was moved farther away

CLUB MEETING EVENTS
2012

<p>January 11th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Award Winning Amateur Movies:</i> screenings from recent AMPS and SCCA events</p>	<p>February 8th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Microphones.</i> Fred Pfof describes types and performances</p> <p><i>Let's Make a Movie.</i> A slide show and discussion by Ron Rhodes</p> <p>Tech-Tips: "Cutting Classes - Blending Modes"</p>
<p>March 14th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>The importance of audio narration to capture and hold viewers' attention</i> By Dana Marks - Voice-Over Professional</p>	<p>April 11th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Audio Sweetening/Fixing:</i> Video Producer Chet Davis takes a look at audio software for improving audio quality</p> <p>Tech-Tips if time allows</p>
<p>May 9th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Nimitz Grade School Movies:</i> screened and presented by teacher Susan Woods</p> <p>Tech-Tips if time allows</p>	<p>June 13th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Program to be announced</i></p> <p>Tech-Tips if time allows</p>
<p>July: date to come</p> <p><i>Program to be announced</i></p> <p>Tech-Tips if time allows</p>	<p>August: date to come</p> <p><i>Program to be announced</i></p> <p>Tech-Tips if time allows</p>
<p>September: date to come</p> <p><i>Program to be announced</i></p> <p>Tech-Tips if time allows</p>	<p>October: date to come</p> <p><i>Annual Member Video Contest:</i> Screening of best movies produced by Club members this year</p> <p>Tech-Tips if time allows</p>
<p>November: date to come</p> <p><i>Golden DVD Awards Night:</i> screening of the top three movies for the year; also election of Club officers for 2013</p>	<p>DECEMBER</p> <p>No meeting this month</p>