

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



IN THIS ISSUE: JULY 2012

June Meeting

Making use of the camcorder's handy light exposure tool with John Dietrich
Pages 1 and 2

President's Message

Bob Meacham says the Club has many knowledgeable members, so pick their brains.
Page 3

VP's Message

Can a documentary film about a video game offer video making insights? Yes says Craig vonWaaden
Page 5

Screenplay Tips

Three masters have their own idiosyncratic ideas of how to write a sure-fire script.
Page 3

Sudoku Puzzle

Frank Swanson's exclusive Viewfinders puzzle hides a mystery word that describes you.
Page 4

Tech Tips

Good Continuity requires careful attention or your project will suffer says Frank Swanson.
Page 6 and 7

Zebras and Other Things

By John Dietrich

June 2012 Meeting

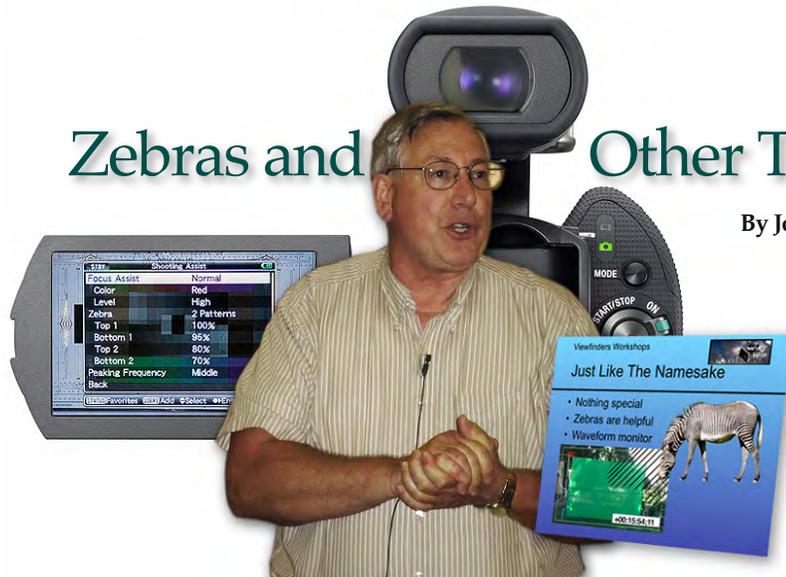
Highlights

Using Your Cameras Zebra Stripes

A Demonstration and Workshop

Members Movies Screened

By Milt Kostner, Brian Lucas and Gordon Peterson



Not all camcorders include the zebra stripe feature, and those who own cameras that do have them might wonder what use the setting might have. Quite simply, zebra stripes (sometimes called zebra pattern) is a handy tool to quickly indicate a camera's light recording exposure and make corrections as needed.

One cannot trust the camera's monitor or viewfinder to represent an accurate light level for the scene to be shot, says John, so zebras help to ensure it. Most scenes will contain more exposure latitude than your camera can record. So whatever exposure

you set, you will lose some information in the shadows or highlights

Zebra stripes are the video equivalent of VU meters for sound levels. Just as a VU meter shows the recording level going into the red zone causes sound to be distorted, so zebra stripes in video indicate when brightness may be too high causing light areas to be overexposed and blown out. Zebra stripes are only visible in the viewfinder or LCD monitor, they are not recorded on the image.

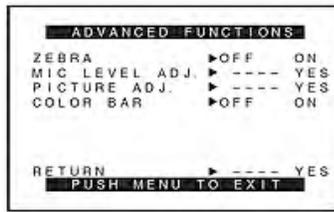
Continued page 2

Wednesday July 11th Meeting
Documentary Filmmaking

DeAnza College Faculty member **Darcy Cohn**, and co-producer of "Pressed for Time", a documentary chronicling the history and last days of the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper's printers will be our guest speaker. She has worked in the film industry since 1980 on a variety of productions.

Zebra stripes, from page 1

There are two basic types of zebra display, 100 IRE* and another that's adjustable at 70-90 IRE. They are used differently, so it is essential to



Above: 100 IRE. Below: Variable IRE Menus

know which one you are looking at. Many pro cameras have both types.

Zebra stripes appear in the monitor as diagonal lines across parts of the image that match a specific level of brightness. In some cameras this level, or threshold, is fixed at around 100% of maximum brightness (white). Higher end cameras may allow additional variable settings (usually increments between 70 and 90% of the maximum brightness). 70-90 IRE is primarily used for interview shots to properly expose facial skin tones. The feature guides the adjustment of the aperture or shutter speed to make the shot brighter or darker as required.

SETTING TYPES

100 IRE* Setting: This type displays a zebra pattern only on areas of the picture which exceed 100 IRE, the upper limit of legal video, the correct value of white. The camera operator



At a setting of 100 IRE the zebra stripes show the mountain peaks to be over exposed and will lose all detail.

adjusts the iris until the zebra is visible in highlight areas, then backs off until the pattern just vanishes, so one doesn't overexpose the scene. This type of zebra pattern is more useful for general purpose exposure, but less accurate for setting closeups on faces.

Variable Setting: 70-90 IRE is mostly used to properly expose facial skin tones, such as interview shots. Highlight on Caucasian skin should best register at about 80 IRE, therefore the camera operator adjusts the iris to



At a setting of 80 IRE the zebra stripes indicate a correct skin exposure for this woman

display a zebra pattern on the highlighted areas of the subject's face at an 80 IRE setting. Darker or lighter skins will display smaller or larger zebra stripe areas so iris adjustments between 70 and 90 IRE may be needed.

USING THE CAMERA'S ZEBRA STRIPES CONTROL

1: *Read the Manual*

If your camcorder supports it, then you'll need to find out how to turn it on and adjust the settings.

2: *Turn on Zebra Patterns*

Turning the setting on will normally be as simple as setting an option in the settings menu of your camera.

3: *Set the Threshold (Level)*

If adjustable this will normally be found in the same section where you enabled the zebra stripes. If you set the threshold level to 100%, then the patterns will only be displayed when aspects of the image are already burnt out and you will need to reduce the exposure. Depending on how you want to work you might want to adjust it to 80% which will give you a 20% safety margin before

problems arise. Some operators set the level to 70% which corresponds to mid tone gray. This is easy to understand, but the downside is that you will nearly always have a large part of the image exposed at 70% so a large part of the image will be obscured by zebra stripes and this can be a source of annoyance.

4: *Using Zebra Stripes*

Your camera's monitor will show zebra stripes on any light sources that are too bright to be recorded properly. If you see the zebra stripes you will need to reduce the light by adjusting the exposure settings of your camcorder.

ZEBRAS AND GREEN SCREENS

When setting up a green screen you want even, consistent lighting over the entire surface of the screen. Zebras can help you find uneven lighting and dark spots to prevent poor exposure. Dark spots cause very bad keys. If there is an area of shadow on the screen it will appear as an area of broken zebras in the camera's monitor and your key will not be a key anymore. Zebras set at 100 IRE (the brightest) is a good place to start.

John suggests that if your camcorder has the zebra stripe feature you should go out and experiment with the various threshold levels to decide which will give your shots the lighting you prefer. There are no hard and fast rules here. The amount of brightness that one wants in one's shots is a matter of personal preference, and one which zebra stripes will help you maintain.

**(IRE scale: Video signal amplitudes devised by the Institute of Radio Engineers (IRE), The IRE scale includes a total of 140 units, with 100 up and 40 down from zero.) ■*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Resources

The most valuable part of any club like Viewfinders is its people. One joins a club to associate with others that have a similar interest and to learn from them, to work alongside them and to share our own knowledge. Each of you joined Viewfinders because of your interest in video and a desire to share, both your work and your skills. Our club is blessed with some very talented and knowledgeable people. We have members whose interests run from basic documentary (capturing family videos and telling the story) to members that earn some income from their skills making movies, shooting wild-

life and capturing events. Whatever your interest, we have members involved.

So, if the main purpose of joining a club is to associate with and learn new skills, I think Viewfinders has that covered. All of the opportunities are here, it just takes your getting involved to meet the people and share the experiences. Sharing is a two way street. If you expect someone to teach you any of the many facets of videomaking; shooting, editing or producing better videos you have to offer them something in return. That can be assistance, shared knowledge, contacts, or whatever they may need. As an old saying goes, "Dancing takes two, and you always have to bring something to the dance."

I encourage each of our members to seek out other members who are doing a style of video that you are interested in and set up some collaboration to do a project together. I think you will be rewarded by it and it will further help spur your interest in

what we are all here for, making better videos.

Also, if you have any questions on shooting, editing and general video stuff, please feel free to contact me and if I cannot help you I will direct you to someone that may be able to help. As I said, we have a very talented club.

Now, along those lines, in August we will have a member's clinic on "Camera Moves" hosted by John Dietrich. If you believe as I do that good videos start with good camera work, and you want to learn how to make those various shots you see in movies, commercials and high end videos, then this is the clinic to attend this year. A few hours of your time will pay itself back in much improved video quality even before it hits the edit bay. A date has not yet been set for this but when it is it will be announced at meetings and via email. So, watch for it as we get through the next month.

Bob Meacham

Great Writers Tips for Your Next Screen Play

Billy Wilder

Billy Wilder was one of the greatest writer/directors in film history, having co-written and directed such classics as "Sunset Boulevard", "Some Like it Hot", "The Apartment", and "Double Indemnity". What screenwriter wouldn't want a little advice from him? Well, here are some of Wilder's screenwriting tips:



1. The audience is fickle.
2. Grab 'em by the throat and never let 'em go.
3. Develop a clean line of action for your leading character...
4. ...and where you're going.

5. The more subtle and elegant you are in hiding your plot points, the better you are as a writer.
6. If you have a problem with the third act, the real problem is in the first act.
7. A tip from Lubitsch: Let the audience add up two plus two. They'll love you forever.
8. In doing voice-overs, be careful not to describe what the audience already sees. Add to what they're seeing.
9. The event that occurs at the second act curtain triggers the end of the movie.
10. The third act must build in tempo and action until the last event, and then—that's it. Don't hang around.

From Conversations with Wilder by Cameron Crowe

Viewfinders Web Site
viewfindersclub.org

Latest Updates

Meetings Page: Watch Gordon Peterson's Gold DVD honorable mention movie "Wall of Shame" river rafting video. Download the short video loop "U.S. Flag in the Wind".

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

"Hollywood Film Directing" - links to seminars on the topics of film directing and screen writing

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

Webmaster: **Frank Swanson**

Continued page 5

Members Videos Screened in June

Three members brought in their recent videos to show to club members. We all enjoy seeing what our fellow enthusiasts are working on and, as Bob Meacham, our President has often said, that is what we are all about. So, whether you have a completed movie or a work in production, please share it will the rest of us.

"Expanding the Magic" by **Milt Kostner**. Professional movie companies now rely on using green screen and computer graphics to hold down production costs



and enhance the special effects we've come to expect in blockbuster films. Milt's video shows

examples of this and includes some of his own experiments.

"Jobs" by **Brian Lucas**. In late May a professional movie company began work on their filmed biography of Apple's co-founder, Steve Jobs.



Job's parents lived in a modest suburban home in Los

Altos, California, on a street that Brian walks his dog every morning. The photos he took he made into a slide show which features some of the crew and equipment at work.

"Viewfinders Green Screen Workshop" by **Gordon Peterson**. This video is a record of the workshop conducted by John Dietrich at KCAT studios in Los



Gatos, California in May. Several Viewfinders members and other interested persons took part in

making several demonstration videos, while learning how to set up a properly lit green screen, work with a vector-scope, act out some roles, and view the results on a laptop. ■

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR JUNE 2012

Bank Account Beginning 6/1/12	\$1435.60
Income Subtotal:	\$27.00
Membership Dues (1)	\$22
DVD Sales (1-MT)	\$5
Expenses Subtotal:	\$0.00
Bank Account Ending 6/30/12	\$1462.60



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 next 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 Pfost	August	Irv Webster & ?
Mar 14th	Nancy Wood & Trixie Visser	September	Virginia Misoff & Gordon Peterson
Apr 11th	Linda Grodt & Brian Lucas	October	Wayne Fogle
May 9th	Bill Loden & Craig VonWaaden	November	Open
June 13th	Jack Gorham & Betty Pickett		

The Viewfinders Club SUDOKU JulyPuzzle by Frank Swanson

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 contains the letters D, E, I, O, R and T which spell a secret word. The solution to this month's easy Sudoku puzzle appears in the back of this newsletter. Have fun with your friends to see how fast each of you can solve this puzzle and identify the secret word! ■

	D		E	T	O
	E				
E		R	I	O	
	O	D	T		E
				E	
O	I	E		D	

VP's MESSAGE



Aspiring Film Makers

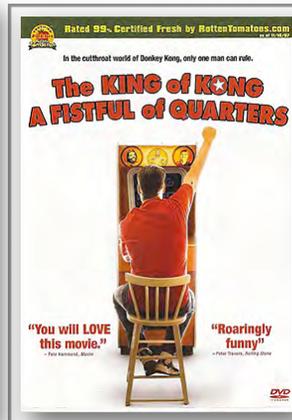
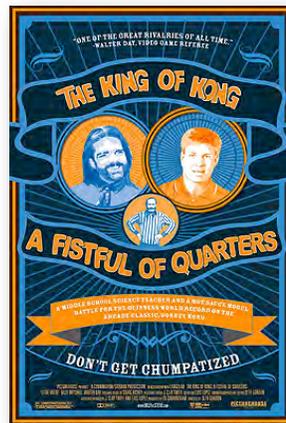
This month, I wanted to talk about documentary films. Our guest speaker the month will be **Darcy Cohn**. She co-produced and directed the documentary "Pressed for Time", about the decline of the newspaper industry.

I know Darcy from my Film/TV studies at De Anza College about 8 years ago. She was (and still is) the instructor for the Non-fiction Workshop F/TV 57A, also known as the documentary class. If you want to be a better documentary filmmaker, I highly recommend this class.

But I also thought I would give a nod to one of my favorite documentary films "The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters." It tells the story of two video game competitors who strive to

be the world-record champion of Donkey Kong. I love this documentary not just because I've spent many quarters on Donkey Kong myself. But it's a wonderfully crafted film from director Seth Gordon. He's done a fantastic job of painting the rival characters: the soft-spoken underdog vs. the over-sized ego villain. As Seth sets up the characters, he builds the story to a climax just as you'd expect from a fiction film.

So even if you no interest in video games, I recommend you check it out



as a filmmaker. As you watch it, think about different filmmaking elements, documentary or other film genres. How the director structures the film and how he colors the characters as protagonist or

antagonist? Note how the story is guided? Is narration present? Music? Note the supporting characters. Animation use? Can you break the film into different acts: beginning, middle, and end? Think about the use of the montages.

Also consider the competition in the story. Competition is a natural fit for documentaries, setting up the viewer for where the film is going: a show-down with a winner and a loser. But note that the competitors are not competing directly with each other one-on-one. They compete as individuals against a machine. The two competitors rarely share the screen together anywhere in the film. Is this an insignificant detail or not? How did the director make that work for him rather than him work around that?

"The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters" is available through iTunes (\$3.99 rental) and Amazon (DVD \$4.99). It may also be available at your local library.

To view the trailer, try http://youtu.be/xMJZ-_bJKdI

Craig vonWaadon

Great Writers, from page 3

Edgar Allen Poe

Edgar Allan Poe penned immortal poems, such as "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee," and unforgettable tales of psychological horror, such as "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Masque of Red Death," "The Cask of Amontillado," and "The Fall of the House of Usher." He was also a prominent literary critic and essayist, as well as the inventor of the detective story. In a recently-found treatise, he set down the following advice for bettering a story:

1. Employ an unreliable narrator, preferably one who doesn't know he is insane and has no recollection of such events as digging into a grave to rip out the teeth of his recently departed lover.
2. Include a beautiful woman with raven locks and porcelain skin, pref-

erably quite young, and let her die tragically of some unknown ailment.

3. Use grandiloquent words, such as heretofore, forthwith, and nevermore. A little Latin will also enhance the text.

4. Do not shy away from such grotesqueries as inebriation, imprisonment, insanity, and men costumed as orangutans being burned to death.

5. When in doubt, bury someone alive.

(Poe didn't really compose this advice, but, as he was fond of a good hoax, we hope he would be pleased by this affectionate charade).

Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut created some of the most outrageously memorable novels of our time, such as "Cat's Cradle", "Breakfast Of Champions", and "Slaughterhouse Five". His work is a mesh of contradic-

tions: both science fiction and literary, dark and funny, classic and counter-culture, warm-blooded and very cool. And it's all completely unique.

1. Use the time of a total stranger (the audience) in such a way that he or she will not feel the time was wasted.
2. Give the reader at least one character he or she can root for.
3. Every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water.
4. Start as close to the end as possible.
5. Be a sadist. No matter how sweet and innocent your leading characters, make awful things happen to them—so that the reader may see what they are made of.
6. Write to please just one person. If you open a window and make love to the world, so to speak, your story will get pneumonia. ■

TECH TIPS

SHOOTING TIPS FOR THE AMATEUR VIDEOGRAPHER: Part 22 by Frank Swanson

Five Kinds of Continuity

Have you ever watched a movie and noticed that something was not quite right, like an actor looking in one direction before the cut, and in another direction after the cut? Or, in our first Club movie "Maybe Today" did you notice that the flowers on the fireplace mantle changed color in a matter of seconds from one shot to another? Continuity in movies is the craft of making the small scene shots seem like a single continuous whole scene. In big studio productions, perfect continuity is so important that crews always include a script supervisor to oversee it. But, even script supervisors can't catch everything. In "Maybe Today", we had a



member assigned to ensure

continuity, but still we had a number of mistakes (flowers/no-flowers on fireplace mantle, hat/no-hat on rack).

1. Continuity of Information: Information mismatches occur because shots covering a single scene may be made minutes, hours, or even days apart, often out of chronological order. A pair of glasses held by the left hand teleports to the right hand, a glass of beer on the table magically disappears a few seconds later. Why? Because the actor and director have forgotten the details of one shot by the time they make the next.

Why care about such trivia when you make your next movie? Because every mistake reminds your audience

that what they're seeing isn't real, isn't how it all actually happened. Before you know it, they're watching the production instead of the story. That may be okay if you want magic to be seen by your audience, but in most cases your goal as a movie-maker is to make the craft of movie-making invisible.



Well, then what's the best way to avoid information mismatches? Simply, when you set up a scene, take a several digital pictures not just from the view of the camcorder, but from different angles to ensure you've covered everything that will be seen in your movie. These pictures provide a view master for the director to use when setting up each successive shot of that scene. They're kind of like visual reminders. Finally, when making a group movie like our Video Productions Group does each year, it's usually more efficient to assign a dedicated crew member to do the continuity comparison (i.e. using those digital pictures) before each shot for the director who is usually focused on the storyline. If there's a problem, then it's identified and corrected before the shooting begins.

2. Continuity of Action: The activities in a scene should match from shot to shot, just like the physical features that are the focus of information continuity. Think of it this way: information means which hand holds the juice drink; action means when the actor drinks the juice. Obviously, if the actor drinks in one angle of a shot, and doesn't in another angle of the same action, you have a major discontinuity. But that kind of goof is easy to spot and correct. A sneakier mismatch involves exactly when the actor takes that drink. If you have recorded the following two shots:

MEDIUM SHOT: "I love fruit juices. (drinks). They really taste good!"
CLOSE SHOT: (drinks) "I love fruit juices. They really taste good!"

... you're in continuity trouble because the action "drinking" occurs at different places



within the dialog.

In a case like this you can sometimes edit around the mismatch:

MEDIUM SHOT: "I love fruit juices. (drinks)
CLOSE SHOT: They really taste good!"



But if the actor does not drink anything from the glass before starting the second line, you're sunk. So, here's where you need to cover the break in continuity:



MEDIUM SHOT: "I love fruit juices. (drinks)
TIGHT CLOSEUP: A picture of all kinds of healthy fruits. (Voice off-camera) They really ...
CLOSE SHOT: ... taste good!"

As a general rule, separating mismatched actions with a cutaway will often distract the viewer's eye enough to conceal the mistake.

3. Continuity of Look: The remaining three types of continuity involve screen direction. Screen direction involves orienting people (and objects like cars) in the same direction with respect to the edges of the frame

Tech Tips, cont. from page 6

(left or right) regardless of their orientation in the actual world.

When you establish a screen direction for your subject to look and/or move toward, you create an imaginary "action line" between the subject and the camera. As long as you keep the two on their respective sides of that line, you'll maintain screen direction continuity. But if you move the camera across the magic line, the subject will instantly switch direction on the screen, though in the real world that



when not moving, subjects should maintain a con-



doesn't actually happen. Even



establishes that the woman is on the left facing right and the man is on the right facing left, then the woman's closeup should also face right and the man's facing left.

continuity of look. If the opening two-shot



Why bother with this continuity of look? Because at the start of each sequence, the audience unconsciously finds its "position" with respect to the woman and the man like a third party in the discussion. If you reverse screen directions, you jump the audience to a new "position", forcing the audience to re-orient themselves and they most likely will get confused.

4. Continuity of Movement: For this type of continuity, you must decide which direction to use – left to right, or right to left. You shouldn't use both directions in the same scene, otherwise that will confuse your



audience. Once the direction is established, don't let the camera cross this line of movement. For example, when a car approaches the camera going from left-to-right, maintain that continuity of movement from shot to shot.



If for some reason you want to change the direction of movement through a sequence of shots, you can insert a cutaway shot between the reversed directions, like an occupant of the car or perhaps the dashboard of the car. By the time you cut back to the moving shots, the audience's memory of the previous screen direction has faded somewhat.

One other trick to change directions is to just let the moving object exit the screen entirely, before picking it up again in a different shot with a different screen direction. For maximum effectiveness, enhance the cut with either of two tricks:

1. End the first shot with an empty frame, and then start with another empty frame before the object enters moving in a new screen direction, or
 2. Allow an extra movement's pause at the end, beginning or preferably both, before resuming the action.
- Before leaving this topic of changing screen direction, you should know that sometimes you might not want movement continuity at all. For example, if you have a succession of shots of a person spending the afternoon touring New York City, a constantly shifting screen direction will indicate a variety of activities in several places over a period of time

5. Continuity of Convention: Let's use the touring of NYC as an exam-

ple of this type of continuity. First, we have to get our actor to NYC, so you start with a shot of a passenger jet flying across the country. And which way does it fly? Left to right, of course, because on a map of the United States west is to the left and east is to the right. So the plane "must" fly toward screen right. That is a continuity of convention, meaning that there's no logical reason for it but the audience expects it and gets confused if it's ignored.

Another convention involves screen directions inside vehicles. If a car is traveling eastward, the car is moving toward screen right, toward the east on a map. Now cut to an interior shot of the driver who should be facing right too. But when you cut to the passenger side, the rider should be facing left! Does this violate screen direction? Technically yes, but conventionally no. All shots of a passenger should be as seen from the



driver's point of view; all shots of the driver should be as seen from the passenger's point of view, no matter which way the car is moving on the screen. By now, audiences have seen this conventional arrangement so many times that they accept it unquestioningly.

So, when you're shooting your next movie, consider these five types of continuity to ensure that your audience is not confused along the way and stays immersed in the story that you're telling. But, the next time you watch TV or go to the movies, pay attention to the director's use of continuity, and for fun try to find any discontinuities that were not discovered. When it comes to creating continuity, what happens in the "real" world doesn't necessarily mean much, only what is seen on the screen counts. ■

CREDITS

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 Viewfinder Newsletter is published during the fourth week of each month, except December, 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

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Sudoku Puzzle Solution from Page 4

R	D	I	E	T	O
T	E	O	D	I	R
E	T	R	I	O	D
I	O	D	T	R	E
D	R	T	O	E	I
O	I	E	R	D	T

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 <i>Let's Make a Movie.</i> A slide show and discussion by Ron Rhodes 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 Tech-Tips: "Capturing Sound in the Field"</p>
<p>May 9th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Nimitz Grade School Movies:</i> screened and presented by teacher Susan Woods Tech-Tips: "Music to set an Intended Mood"</p>	<p>June 13th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Zebras, and How to Use Them</i> by John Dietrich <i>Internet Video Sharing Sites</i> by Craig VonWaaden</p>
<p>July 11th, Wednesday</p> <p>Director / Co-producer Darcy Cohn discusses "Pressed for Time" her documentary about the imminent demise of the newspaper printing industry Tech-Tips if time allows</p>	<p>August 8th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Program to be announced</i> Tech-Tips if time allows</p>
<p>September 12th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Program to be announced</i> Tech-Tips if time allows</p>	<p>October 10th, Wednesday</p> <p><i>Annual Member Video Contest:</i> Screening of best movies produced by Club members this year Tech-Tips if time allows</p>
<p>November 14th, Wednesday</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>