

*Next Club Meeting: Wednesday, April 8th, 2009.  
7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Cupertino Room,  
Quinlan Center, 10185 N. Stelling Rd.,  
Cupertino, CA*



IN THIS ISSUE: APRIL 2009

**Shooting the Club Movie**

VVP's 2009 production is now well under way. **Pages 1, 2, and 4**

**News from "The Better Part" and the Nimitz Children**

Bill Mannion on an upcoming show and news from Nimitz School. **Page 3**

**Calling the Shots**

Confused by on-set movie terms? Here's a list of the most common shot calls. **Page 4**

**Working with a Steady Cam**

VDVC President Fred Pfof improves his DIY steady cam. **Page 5**

**Product Review**

Bob Meacham describes his Azden CAM-3 Audio Mixer. **Page 5**

**Tech Tips**

Frank Swanson shows us a few simple rules to compose our shots like a pro. **Page 6**

# "Assumptions" and the Art of Movie Making

## February Meeting

Unfortunately, due to a technical glitch in hooking up the Quinlan Center's new audio/visual system to both a camcorder and a laptop computer, the scheduled program "*The Physics of Light and how Videographers Make Use of It*" and "*High Definition Video*" which were to be presented by **Fred Pfof**, **Franz Helbig** and **Milt Kostner** will have to be postponed to a future club meeting.

"**Tech Tips**", the popular monthly workshop conducted by **Frank Swanson** did go ahead however, and an article on the subject, "*Framing*" appears on page 6.

**April Meeting**

## Theme Challenge "Coast"

Club members are challenged to bring short movies to the April meeting that address the given theme

As Viewfinders members know, Viewfinders Video Productions (VVP) has set itself the goal of producing at least one movie a year of a suitable quality for submission to amateur movie festivals. We have now embarked on the shooting stage of our fourth movie, titled "*Assumptions*", and probably the most complex to date. The story is simple enough, being concerned about a man who was deprived of a normal childhood by an overly doting mother. As a grown man he decides to build his neighborhood kids a small playground but falls under suspicion when a small child goes missing. The complexity derives from the story requiring a much larger cast than our previous movies, multiple locations, lighting requirements, capturing much more dialog, and the need for



Director Dale Porter, Tech Director Franz Helbig and Lighting Technician John Dietrich study the field monitor for camera angles

strong dramatic performances from the actors.

As we tackle each new production we find that we need to extend our skills to address new technical concerns. Although we don't claim that our movies are perfect, we see improvements to our movie making abilities with each new production. We learn on the job, so to speak, which no amount of book reading can do. We

*Continued page 2*

Continued from page 1

also take pride in that each of our movies have won at least one award, some of them several. (A shot from our first movie "Maybe Today" still appears on the web site of a Scottish international film festival three years later.)

Making a movie that will be shown to a large audience requires disciplines and skills beyond those videos that we make for ourselves and our families to see. Poor filming will not be tolerated by festival judges, therefore we strive to bring a certain amount of professionalism to our work, albeit with a nonexistent budget.

Most of our crew have worked on our previous productions and have learned that good movie making doesn't come easy. It is a time consuming business whereby each step and shoot needs to be carefully thought out and planned. Correct camera settings and techniques, shot continuity, clean on-set audio capture and consistent, accurate lighting require expert knowledge. If all these separate skills are accomplished a far better final product is more assured.

The VVP crew shoot many hours of video for a production that will finally be cut down to what will be only a 15 minute movie. Professionals shoot at a ratio of 20:1, that means 19 out of 20 minutes of footage will end up in the cutting room floor. This is not because they shoot a lot of bad film, on the contrary most of it is excellent. It is because they know that in the final editing stage the editor needs a whole mass of material to ensure proper continuity from shot to shot, a choice of takes to get the story working well, and plenty of cut-away footage to link shots within and parallel to a scene. No-one wants to go

back and re-shoot scenes that don't have these necessities. Nor, possibly, will the schedule allow it.

We have been shooting "Assumptions" over the last few weekends and are roughly one quarter to one third of the way through the schedule. The takes completed are mostly exterior scenes shot in a park and at a movie character's house where we have been lucky with the weather. Beginning early in the year, rain could have disrupted the schedule but fortunately it held off. Interior shots were

taken inside the above house and inside a hardware store. Our Technical Director reports that so far we have good, useable footage. Future scenes, set in the protagonist's house where he is interview by the police, will require very careful planning where lighting, audio capture and dramatic acting is particularly crucial to the story. The crew's work on previous productions should go a long way to getting it done right.

VVP members are learning to work together as a team and share exper-



All photos courtesy Milt Kostner

From production meetings to location shoots, the movie slowly comes together. See more photos on page 4.

**CLUB MEETINGS REFRESHMENTS VOLUNTEERS**

*The club thanks those who will or have provided refreshments*

Jan. 14th, Wed.	Fred Pfost	June 10th, Wed.	Bill Mannion
Feb. 11th, Wed.	Janet Holl	July	
March 11th, Wed	Bernie Wood	August	Glenn Mooty
		September	Jim Visser
April 8th, Wed.	Brian Lucas	October	
May 13th, Wed	Stan Smith	November	

tise in different areas of production, thereby improving everyone's skills. We would like to extend that knowledge to all Viewfinders members. There are many assisting crew positions that can help new members dip their toes in the water, so to speak, and learn the art of good movie making just as those of us that have worked on previous productions have done. ■



## Naming Your Shots

When describing the kind of shot you wish to take when working with others, it is useful to describe it in terminology that is commonly used in the movie industry. The following short list will clarify common terms.

**Establishing:** Usually a wide view of the set or location that serves to inform the audience where the action is taking place and occurs whenever the story changes location.

**Master:** Similar to an Establishing shot, it includes all significant action in a scene and is often shot before resetting the scene.

**Insert:** A short, usually close up shot of a significant action or detail within the scene.

**Cutaway:** A supporting shot related to yet different from the main action. Mostly useful in editing to fix poor continuity or errors in the primary footage. Also used for reaction shots.

**Reaction:** A shot of a person's or people's reaction to an action in the scene.

**Point of View (POV):** Placing the camera as though looking through the character's eyes and recording their point of view.

**Single or One-Shot:** The main subject dominates the frame, often excluding other subjects.

**Double or Two-Shot:** Two subjects dominate the frame.

**Three-shot:** Three subjects dominate the frame.

**Over the Shoulder (OTS):** Used, but not confined to two person interviews where the camera shoots over one subject's shoulder towards the second person. Also used over the shoulder of an actor to see what he or she is looking at.

**Dolly Shot:** Physically moving the camera forward, backward, left or right on a movable support such as a dolly, wheelchair, or other wheeled vehicle.

**Crane Up/Down:** Physically elevating or lowering the camera on a movable support such as a crane, boom or jib while shooting.



**Zoom In/Out:** Changing the camera's focal length between a wide and narrow field of view to encompass a larger or lesser frame area and causing the subject to appear closer or farther away.

**Pan:** While shooting, and usually on a tripod, the camera is rotated left or right without changing its base position.

**Tilt:** While shooting, aiming the camera up or down without changing its base position. ■

More photos from "Assumptions" shoots. Continued from page 2.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Sometime in January at one of our VPG meetings Milt showed an article describing a "poor man's steadycam". I took the paper and ordered one of the devices for \$39 complete. It was an interesting assemblage of pipes and weights but it did nothing in the way of steadying a camcorder while shooting.



I took it apart and made a large bearing housing and a handle and added a camera mount from an old tripod. The final configuration is that shown in the picture with JoAnn holding it. It works much better than the original but it still needs some upgrades. I am thinking how I can add a gyroscope or two to it to make it at least as good as the professional ones that can run into the tens of thousands dollars.

*Fred Post*

Video Equipment Review

AZDEN Audio Mixer CAM-3

By Bob Meacham

Trying to improve your video work, and especially adding better audio, can be difficult on a budget. If you have a consumer video camera that has an external microphone jack, normally the mini-stereo 1/8th inch stereo type, they allow you to use either the onboard microphone, or plug in one external microphone. However, if you want to capture inputs from more than one microphone at a time in your videos you should check out the AZDEN CAM-3 Audio Mixer.

Let me first say it is not what I would consider a true mixer in that it is a "passive" mixer, it does not amplify but it attenuates inputs. I like to think of it more as an "input leveler". It is capable of taking inputs from up to three microphones all using a mini-stereo or mono 1/8th inch jack and using sliders (attenuators). You can set the individual levels for each microphone for a balanced output into your camera jack.

The CAM-3 has three inputs and one stereo output. One of the inputs is only left channel, one is only right channel while the third is stereo, putting the microphone input onto both channels for output. If you are shooting an interview with two people you can put one voice in the left, one voice in the right and with a third microphone capture ambient sounds in both channels. The output is stereo based on the left and right inputs or a single stereo input from input three.

I have done some tests with mine using a wireless lav microphone and

a camera mounted shotgun microphone. I found the sliders easy to adjust, sensitive enough to control the levels smoothly and it was quite easy to mix and match the levels to what I wanted. The unit is small and light weight, about the size of a pack of cigarettes. And, since it is not an active mixer (no amplifier circuits) it never runs low on battery power, a problem with some lower cost electronics, because it does not use any

batteries. You will need a male to male cable to go from the CAM-3 output to your camera.



Specifications\*

Inputs: 3 x Mono 3.5mm (mic level)

Output: 1 x Stereo 3.5mm (mic level)

Adjustments: Channels 1, 2 and 3: min to max sliders

Gain: -6dBu to 10dBu  
Microphone impedance (input audio): 600 ohms  
Video camera side (output audio) impedance: 10Kohms

Each channel volume level in dBu:  
CH1 -8dB  
CH2 -8dB  
CH3 (mix) -16dB

\*Depends on microphone and camera impedance, the result may differ

The CAM-3's use is somewhat limited to use with equipment that uses the mini-stereo 1/8th jack or non-powered microphones that can be adapted to the mini-stereo. It does not accept XLR inputs. However, most people with consumer cameras are using the mini-stereo type anyway.

The other part of this is that it does not require an investment

equal to your camera. The AZDEN CAM-3 can be found online for around \$50 at places like Amazon and B&H Photo. You will pay more than that for your second or third microphone.

Bottom line; it is a very usable passive mixer for up to three microphones for folks with consumer cameras. I would recommend this to anyone that wants more than what the on-board microphone or one single external microphone can give them. ■

# TECH TIPS

By Frank Swanson

How hard can it be to shoot video with your camcorder? Just remove the lens cover, turn it on, look through the viewfinder at your subject and press the record button. What could be easier? Your subject is in front of you doing something or talking with someone. Just hold your camcorder steady while keeping your subject centered in the frame of your viewfinder. Well, that kind of shot composition may work for the novice and/or the inexperienced owner of a new camcorder, but it won't do for the serious amateur videographer. The Tech-Tip that we screened at our March meeting is all about shot composition techniques that will help make your movies look like they've been shot by a pro.

**1. The Rule of Thirds:** Imagine a tic-tac-toe grid over your viewfinder and place your subject so that they simul-



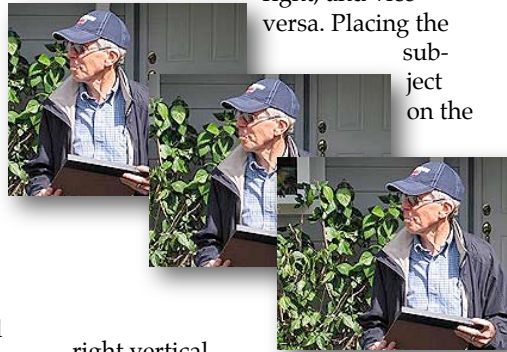
taneously fall along one of the two horizontal lines and one of the two vertical lines. This rule is especially true for framing people and objects, and works well whether you're shooting wide, medium or close-ups. Very far shots don't need to follow this rule, as their purpose is usually to just provide an establishing shot.

**2. Don't Chop the Chin:** When shooting extreme close-ups of people, it's a sin to chop the chin. It's OK to chop the top of the person's head allowing



the forehead to fall out of the frame, but it's NOT OK to cut off the chin.

**3. Compose the Nose:** Nose room or look-room refers to the space between your subject's nose and the side of the screen. If your subject is looking to the right, allow for some breathing room in the direction that the nose is pointed, that is to the right, and vice versa. Placing the subject on the



right vertical thirds line will provide breathing room to the left. Placing the subject in the middle of the frame is not good because it just provides a good shot of their ear, and placing them on the left vertical thirds line just looks bad.

**4. Lead Them On:** Lead-room sets the Rule of Thirds in motion. When shooting people in motion you need to allow ample room ahead of them. As you pan with the subject, try to keep them on the trailing



third vertical line. This gives the person room to move into the area ahead of themselves. If there's a group of subjects, give the front-run-

ner the lead-room, and don't worry about the others who trail. A good fluid-head tripod will make for a smooth pan motion and make this lead-room process easy and smooth.

**5. Beware of Bad Backgrounds:** When you shoot, compose the whole frame. Look for poles or plants that seem to protrude out of the top of your subject's head. Look out for wires that seem to go in one ear and out the other. Simply move your camera to one side or the other or raising or



lowering of the tripod will correct the problem. Catch these problems before you start to record so that you don't record bad footage in those situations where you only get one chance.



This Tech Tip is available on the Digital Juice Community/DJTV webpage [www.digitaljuice.com](http://www.digitaljuice.com) and using the keyword "Take 5" in the Search window with "All Words" selected; then scroll down to the "I've Been Framed" episode. I'll select another 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\_video@swansonhome.com

Secretary: Brian Lucas  
 lucasbouret@sbcglobal.net

**WEBSITE**

www.viewfindersclub.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2009

<p><b>JAN 14th, Wednesday</b>                  Meeting: AMPS 2008 Contest winning videos screened</p>	<p><b>FEB 11th, Wednesday</b>                  Meeting: Presentation on the Theory of Light and Video Lighting: Fred Pfof and John Dietrich                  Tech-Tips: "Cutting Room Floor"</p>
<p><b>MARCH 11th, Wednesday</b>                  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"</p>	<p><b>APRIL 8th, Wednesday</b>                  Meeting: "Theme Challenge- Coast" screening night                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>MAY 13th, Wednesday</b>                  Meeting: Club Members Movie Night                  Physics of Sound and Sound Editing by Fred Pfof and Bob Meacham                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>JUNE 10th, Wednesday</b>                  Meeting: Panel discussion "DVD Authoring"                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>JULY Date TBD</b>                  Meeting: Nimitz Grade School Videos                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>AUGUST Date TBD</b>                  Meeting: "Theme Challenge" Screening Night                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>SEPTEMBER Date TBD</b>                  Meeting: Guest speaker TBD                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>OCTOBER Date TBD</b>                  Meeting: Club Annual Video Contest screening                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p><b>NOVEMBER Date TBD</b>                  Meeting: Annual Gold DVD Awards and Social                  Tech-Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p><b>DECEMBER</b>                  No meeting this month</p>

BLANK PAGE