PANORAMA

OF AMATEUR FILM & VIDEO   SUR LE FILM ET VIDEO

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NOTE VACANCIES!

ANY VOLUNTEERS?

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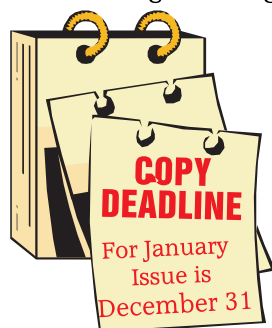(905) 765-5408
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VACANT

Photo by Joseph Bochsler Jr.

Fred Briggs, FSCCA

First, before getting to the important stuff, I must apologize for this issue being a few weeks later than expected. There were several reasons for this, as there always are, but the major problems were (1) the failure of two hard drives on my Photo/Video computer (which held over 6,000 photographs for my history project collected over 10 years from a great many sources) followed immediately by (2) the complete failure -- a meltdown of the Southbridge chip on the motherboard -- of the "business" computer on which I store all the records for the SCCA, among a great deal of other important things, like all my email and everything prepared for this issue of PANORAMA!

Unfortunately, the Photo/Video computer hadn't been completely backed up since last January, though many recent pictures had been saved in two different places, on different hard drives. Eventually I was able to get the dead drives working a little, just enough to extract most of the missing data.

I had backed up all my hard drives on the "business" computer only a few days before the collapse, so most of that data wasn't in jeopardy at all. I merely had to build up a new computer with my existing hard drives, reformat C drive, and reinstall Windows and *all* my programs! I'm still doing that, but I have enough of it working now to get on with this issue. All's well the ends well!

I'm pleased to report, that unlike too many of my reports, I have no bad news this month about the passing away of any of our SCCA Members!

However, as many of you will already have heard, the Amateur Movie Makers Association (AMMA), formerly the Society of Amateur Video Makers and Cinematographers (SAVAC), and before that, simply the Society of Amateur Cinematographers (SAC), has announced at their Annual Convention, held on the weekend of October 10th in Buena Vista Park in California, that their organization would be packing it in, with a final issue of their AMMA Monitor to be published early in December.

Several SCCA Affiliated Clubs, and several of our Individual Members, also hold memberships in the AMMA, and a few of us had heard rumours lately that AMMA might be nearing their end due to a declining membership and a lack of sufficient volunteers (problems, I might point out, also experienced by the SCCA) as well as "*new government regulations which make operating the club difficult* ", with which we're unfamiliar, but we remained hopeful of their survival until receiving emails notifying their membership on October 23rd.

Some of us living in Canada took little part in AMMA activities and probably belonged to their organization simply to support them, and may have met a few of their members only at Joint Conventions of the SCCA and SAVAC/AMMA held in Canada or in American border cities, like Buffalo and Detroit. A few of our members, most notably the Cosgroves, were very active indeed in AMMA. Others, like Carolyn and I, tried to attend all SAVAC/AMMA meetings held in the east. We first attended their 1983 convention in Silver Springs, Maryland (adjoining Washington, DC) and later at Tarrytown NY (near White Plains) in 1986, and traveled as far west as Park City, Utah (near Salt Lake City) in 1994. In between, we attended their conventions in Niagara Falls NY and Niagara Falls ON, as well as Joint conventions in Kingston, Toronto, and Hamilton ON, and in South Gate, MI (just south of Detroit).

Over the years we became good friends with many of their members from all over the USA, and while we have seen less of them since they adopted a policy of holding their conventions chiefly in the West, we will miss them greatly, and we are sorry to learn that they will no longer be as closely associated with one another as they have been. The saddest "joke" I've ever heard may well be "Would the last person out please turn out the lights!"

We can only hope that a few of them (AMMA Clubs as well as Individual AMMA Members) will seek us out and become affiliated with the SCCA, both to support *us*, and to continue to belong to a group of people who share their interests.

As you will read in other places in this issue, we too are finding it difficult to attract volunteers. Two of our ladies have retired from their offices, and others, particularly Thom Speechley, who is now filling in as Recording Secretary, must wear more than his share of hats. While most of our SCCA Executives (VP's excepted) attend most of our Executive Meetings, attendance isn't mandatory, and we would certainly like to expand our geographic reach. We are trying to hold fewer meetings in this internet age, and we are open to reshuffling the jobs so that volunteers from farther afield are able to contribute to the work of the Executive.

How about you? ■

CLUB NEWS

By Thom Speechley

All of the clubs we hear from seem to be back up to speed for the new club year. Program agendas are being settled and hope for expanded membership is being discussed. And regrettably, as life moves along, there are reports of the loss of good friends or members of several clubs. But happily, all clubs look forward to a productive year and welcome the challenges of changing priorities and technologies.

BRANT VIDEO MAKERS

Brant Camcorder News editor, Dan Kennaley

The "theme" for the opening meeting was "Character". Dan asked members to bring in a sample of their work which highlights the character of an unusual person. The rest of the year will also be devoted to subjects which deal with "looking for stories of life complex and different." Most of the monthly program topics have been announced.

    October --- Play
    November --- Death
    December --- Religion
    March --- Media
    April --- Country
    May --- Homes.

Other themes are to be announced. These subjects are moving into interesting territory. Bravo and good luck. Scheduled guest speaker for the November meeting will be Iain Calder, an experienced "Powerpoint" producer who will share some of his techniques. Dan has already sent out via e-mail, an amusing example of Iain's work.

BUFFALO VIDEO-MOVIE MAKERS

"Camerama" editor John Weiksnar

Scheduled for the September meeting, the opening of the 75th year of operation, was a showing of material from The Buffalo 48-Hour Film Project, in which three club members participated. The September issue of the newsletter also included tributes to four members or friends of the club who died earlier this year: Frank Birch, Jack Carey, Charles Burdette and Thomas Alesse. The October issue again reminded members of the due date of the "Shorty" contest of October 10. Also mentioned is that this year's prize is a Beachtek Dual XLR audio adapter. This month, President Emil Novak offers a few tips for making a film in the "Horror" genre. Some key points: The depiction of fate as an unstoppable force, preoccupation with things unseen, negative forces.

HAMILTON VIDEO/FILM MAKERS

Reel News, editor Dave Stewart

In the September newsletter, Jon Soyka's tongue-in-cheek report of the August meeting tries to give the impression of poor organization. We are convinced that is not true. Several members showed their recent work and responded to questions from the floor.

Harold Cosgrove, at the mic takes questions from viewers while incoming president Dan Copeland, left, and Jon Soyka provide moral support.

Photo By Joe Bochsler

Also in this issue, John Cook reports on the status of poor lip-sync in some digital TV signals.

He tells us that the current HDMI standard has corrections for the problem but there does not appear to be significant effort by the TV set industry to make the corrections universal. If you are thinking about going 'digital' you might want to read a related (quite technical) article at: **http://www.videsignline.com** Search for 'sync hdmi'.

The September meeting was devoted to the showing of members 'Holiday Travel' videos. Six productions were shown ranging in subject from Harold Cosgrove's tour of the Vegas 'strip' to Jon Soyka's 'Crawfish Farming' in Louisiana.

Perhaps the highlight of the night was footage shot by Dan Copeland in 3D. This is an interesting step and it would be worthwhile to have a report on the audience reaction. Personally I would like to see at least a picture of Dan's camera setup.

The evening ended with a reminder that volunteers will be required to help make the October "Visitor's Night" a success.

LONDON VIDEOGRAPHY CLUB
It's A Wrap editor, TBA

At the September meeting, the guest for the evening was Steve Andrusiak.

Steve has very broad experience across Canada in radio and TV broadcasting as reporter, writer and executive producer. His subject was 'story telling' and he introduced us to an easy-to-remember formula for the planning of a story. The four basic steps in the "template" are 1) the setting 2) developing conflict 3) final resolution and 4) the conclusion. He illustrated these steps by showing part of a documentary about the job of firefighters. Members then participated in planning a story to cover a local event to take place the next day. The evening also included a short look at the video prepared by attendees at the 2007 SCCA Convention in Hamilton.

The October meeting was the annual "3 Bag Shoot". This year Kim Brown prepared three bags, each containing identical articles. Unfortunately, despite Kim's efforts, several members were enjoying late season vacations and only enough people showed up to carry out two productions. So, what would you do with a) a boudoir lamp, disassembled, b) a screwdriver, c) an easel with newsprint flip chart, d) a power bar. Stay tuned for the unveiling at our December meeting.

TORONTO FILM AND VIDEO CLUB
TFVC Newsletter editor Josephine Black

Due to a conflict in publication dates the Toronto club's July newsletter was not included in the September issue of PANORAMA. Our apologies.

The newsletter reported the successful annual banquet that attracted fifteen people. Announcement of winners of the annual video competition is also included. The "Best Video" award was presented to Bill

Simonson for "Controlled Indoor Lighting". Winners in other categories were: 5 Min. Contest, Stella Magic for "The Equator" - Class B, Bob Peterson for "Memories of Autumn" - Class A, Bill Simonson for "Controlled Indoor Lighting" - Music, Marilyn Reid for "The Winter of Our Discontent" - Humour, Richard Ogner for "Camera Stroller " – Narration, Ben Andrews for "The Great Wall" – Best Story, Ben Andrews for "The Bully – Documentary, Bill Simonson for "Controlled Indoor Lighting" – Cinematography, Dennis Hemery for "Autumn" – Sound, Stella Magic for "The Centre Of The Earth".

The club resumes activities in October at which time the meeting will be devoted to a tribute to Jack Carey.

VICTORIA VIDEO CLUB
The Bulletin, editor James Hatch
The main feature scheduled for the October meeting was a general discussion and demonstration of sound equipment and techniques of use by members of the club. Members were invited to bring camcorders, headphones and various types of external microphones. They were also expected to have some kind of scenario or short interview to shoot. The object of the exercise was to evaluate the results of each of the events in order to judge the relative effectiveness of each type of mic. All of the final examples will be 'pooled' to produce a DVD that all members can review. Still on the subject of sound, the Sony "Blue Tooth" technology will be demonstrated during the meeting, as an addition to conventional wireless mics.

The Sony Bluetooth" wireless microphone system.

WINNIPEG AMATEUR MOVIE AND VIDEO CLUB
Bulletin editors, Wallace and Jeanette Robertson
The October issue of the Bulletin contains a tribute to late member John Gauthier. This is very interesting reading because John could trace his ancestry to the earliest settlers on the prairies and demonstrate his kinship with Louis Riel. The club surely has

some valuable memories to share. Elsewhere in the issue, President Al Ross stresses the importance of enlisting new membership. This appears to be a major concern among all clubs.

AMATEUR MOVIE MAKERS ASSOCIATION
AMMA Monitor editor, Gina Gullace
In the September issue, thoughts about the annual Videomaker's Convention to be held October 10-11, prompted President Walt Gilmore to reminisce about other meetings and the people who contributed so much to SAVAC/AMMA over the years. The column reads like a virtual directory of familiar names and makes reference to their major works. Walt's article from the June issue about how to define an amateur is continued here. This subject has been discussed and argued about for years. As a handy reference, he quotes the general rule for the AMPS (American Motion Picture Society) annual contest. The entry must be "made solely for fun and pleasure, for artistic expression or to make a statement about society with no profit motive in mind…no person working on any aspect of the production may be paid." The article also deals with problems with any definition when considering experience, equipment and even subject matter. In the end, the final verdict in any contest depends upon the subjectivity of the judges. In another article, Shooting and Editing Scripted Dialogue, Walt goes into considerable detail explaining effective editing for dialog. The article, with helpful illustrations offers some good tips for fixing up missed words or cues by inexperienced actors.

INSTITUTE OF AMATEUR CINEMATOGRAPHERS (IAC)
Film and Videomaker editor, Garth Hope
In her regular column, outgoing Chairman Linda Gough expresses thanks to IAC members who have supported her during the past two years. The column reminds readers of the Annual General Meeting to be held 24th to 26th of October. Other news includes congratulations to Vice President Gerald Mee who will be honoured with a presentation by the Queen of an MBE for voluntary service to heritage in Leek, Staffordshire.

GET THE SHOT!
by Fred Briggs

In the September Issue I touched on the difficulty I was having choosing between the various paths before me. Since that time, the problem has only worsened!

You may remember that I made reference to finding programs for one feature that had different additional features that might also be very useful, and that different programs had different secondary features. I introduced two separate approaches to making the transition between frames – dissolves or morphing. I didn't go down the path of doing dissolves, because it doesn't look very promising, and I was looking for a program that would automate morphing between sets of frames. I set that problem aside to examine ways to get the best "frame grabs" from video footage to use as the pictures that I would convert to paintings, and the remainder of the September article concentrated on Photo Acute, that promised to do just that, among other wonderful tricks, and I heartily recommended the program for many of its features.

As I said above, I have found a number of programs that deserve consideration for various aspects of the problem, and the question now is "Which way do I go next?" I had ended up describing a feature that removes an unwanted moving object that appears in one or some pictures but not in all, and promising to discuss that feature later in an article about stitching programs. So that's what I decided to do this month!

Over the years I've published several articles that mentioned stitching pictures together that were too large to scan in one go, and after looking through them all I can't find anything about controlling the difference in brightness between adjacent shots. I'm speaking here about the fact that in one shot the sky appears a little darker than the same point in another shot which often produces an unwelcome straight-line change in brightness or colour that is most noticeable in the sky. This problem is prevalent in adjacent shots from a camera, or scans from a scanner, so

ideally you would like it to be handled well by the stitching software that you use to join the two (or more) pictures together. I had found a solution of sorts that applied to scanning only, and I thought I had passed it on to you, but since I haven't, here it is now.

Do not "prescan" for each scan in a series. If your software does this automatically, try to turn off the automatic prescan. First scan a section of the picture that is intermediate between the brightest and least bright areas on your picture. If one end of your picture shows a lot of bright or light areas, and the other end shows a lot of shadows or dark coloured areas, the "average brightness" which will be found on each prescan, will vary, and when those end pictures are joined together, the "middle tones" will be affected by the light areas in the one scan and the dark areas in the other. After prescanning on an average area, scan the first end, and then move the picture and scan the next section, etc., and then before stitching, remove the one that was your "average". This isn't perfect, but it's better than the alternative – a shadow in the sky!

However, as I said above, this only works for scanning. Some digital cameras have a Panorama setting which will freeze the exposure for a series of shots. If you don't have that, see if there is some way that you can prevent the camera from choosing a new exposure level for each shot, like, maybe, freezing the exposure setting or putting it on manual. Even underexposing or over exposing all the shots a little will probably be better than exposing each shot perfectly, but differently from its neighbour(s).

If all else fails, and it often will, you are down to software. Some stitching software does a better job of blending or smoothing the transition between bright and dark skies, for example, than do some others. I've often had one piece of software do a better job at this than another occasionally, so I've been

on the lookout for one that does a great job of this every time.

I should make it clear here and now that when I talk about "panoramas" I'm talking about the kind of panorama that we can pan through with a program like DigiRostrum (on which I reported on Page 6 of the Fall 2006 PANORAMA – and the price has dropped dramatically since then!) to create the illusion of panning a video camcorder on a scene, or photograph. I'm not talking about 360º Panoramas or Virtual Reality (VR) that many people use on the internet to let the viewer "pan" interactively to simulate standing in the middle of a scene, or a room, and view the space from many angles. This is indeed a useful application, and at least as technically challenging, but I'm specifically referring here to the type of "flat" panorama that can have a wide use in home videos. Many of the programs I looked at will do the flat stuff *and* the fancier stuff, and if 360º or VR is what you want, you should look for that, too.

In the September Issue of PANORAMA I described a feature of Photo Acute that let you remove people who were moving through a scene by taking several shots and then using the "Remove moving objects from the scene" option. Similarly, the removal of people and things that moved in the two pictures, that is, the position of their limbs, or their position in the scene, in the two areas that are common to two of the pictures you are stitching together, was a feature that I was amazed to find available in some stitching software!

I remember visiting Fort Niagara in NY State on a weekend, that was thronged with visitors. I stood well back from the original French building, but couldn't get it all in one shot, so I stood on the path that led straight to the front door of the building and shot first the end on my left, and then the end on my right. Only it wasn't that easy. People were walking to and from the building on the path on which I stood, and which would be the area of overlap, and others walked along in front of the building

Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of
The Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs

held in the Council Chamber of the former Stoney Creek City Hall, Hamilton, Ontario, on Friday, September 19, 2008.

S.C.C.A. HONOURS AWARDS

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm, by the President, Fred Briggs.

Present: Joan and Joe Bochsler, Carolyn and Fred Briggs, Keith Gloster, Agnes and Adam Houston, Joan Jacquemain, Richard Ogner [voting as the Club Representative of the Toronto Film & Video Club], Jim Small, Thom Speechley, Jim Town, Sandy Whitehouse. The Brant Video Makers, The Hamilton Video/Film Makers, and the London Videography Club were also represented for voting by Club Representatives already named above. **Observing**, but not participating, were visitors John Cook and
 Mary and Harold Cosgrove, and arriving after the business meeting adjourned and taking part in some of the other activities were Helen Gruber and Reinhard Buehling from Ottawa, and Jon Soyka from Hamilton.

Quorum
Fred Briggs announced that we had a quorum present.

Minutes of the 2007 AGM had been included in the conference package given to each delegate. It was moved by Sandy Whitehouse, seconded by Joan Jacquemain, that the minutes be accepted as circulated. Carried unanimously.

Membership
Thom Speechley reported that the paid-up membership up to September 14th is:
  6 Clubs (down 1),
  7 Patrons (down 1),
  3 Sustaining,
  5 Honourary (down 2, deaths),
  1 Life (down 2),
  1 Family (down 7), and
  9 Individual Members (down 11).
He commented that more renewals are expected. Thom moved acceptance of his report. Carried.

SCCA Contest
Keith Gloster reported that this year there were 23 entries, from eight or nine separate individuals for this year's contest. All were submitted on DVD's. Judging was completed on schedule. There were no teen or novice entries this year. A few awards have been combined. Fewer entries may mean financial concerns in future.
Keith then moved the acceptance of his report. Carried.

PANORAMA
Fred Briggs outlined the major changes that have taken place this year with PANORAMA. Richard Ogner mentioned running off three copies of PANORAMA once this year to use them to attempt to get new members for SCCA. The policy is that a copy is sent to each club. Clubs are allowed to copy to get members, but not to automatically send it to everyone in the club every time.

CIAFF
This has been a very busy year for Jon Soyka, the CIAFF Competition Chair. While judging of the Amateur category entries has all been completed, judging of the Student and Independent entries will be completed soon. Numbers of entries have declined from previous years as there are ever increasing numbers of film contests.

Financial
On behalf of the Treasurer, Carolyn Briggs, Fred went over the Auditor's Report and the Financial Statements, copies of which had been included in each delegate's conference package. He pointed out that the changes to PANORAMA have already made an improvement in our financial position.

Executive
We will be losing two members of the Executive this year – Stella Magic, the Librarian, after nine years, and Sandy Whitehouse, the Secretary, after five years. It is expected that there may be a reorganization of the new Executive.

Honours Committee
The Chairman, Thom Speechley, presented the **Associate of SCCA** designation to Stella Magic, in absentia.

Fred Briggs presented the **Fellow of SCCA** to Thom Speechley.
The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm

Sandy Whitehouse ∎

At the Annual General Meeting on September 19th, Thom Speechley, Chairman of the SCCA Honours Committee, announced the Committee's decision to award the Honour of Associate of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs (ASCCA) to Stella Magic with the following words:
"I quote the **General Rules regarding the awarding of Honours of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs**:
'SCCA honours are awarded in recognition of contributions to the advancement of the arts and sciences of photography. Since personal achievement alone does not necessarily contribute to the advancement of photography, it does not qualify the candidate unless combined with elements of service. On the other hand, service may contribute substantially to the advancement of photography, even though the candidate's proficiency in the use of the medium may be limited.
'The proposer must be an individual member of SCCA in good standing who knows the candidate personally through close association for a period of time. The proposer shall obtain as endorser an individual member of SCCA in good standing. Members of the Honours Committee may not make or endorse proposals.

'ASSOCIATESHIP (ASCCA) QUALIFICATIONS
'This award shall be made on the basis of substantial contributions to the advancement of the artistic or technical quality of motion pictures, through such activities as teaching, lecturing, judging, writing, publication of articles, papers, etc., organizational or administrative work, and personal achievements in producing motion pictures. Both service and proficiency in film making, or photographic knowledge, are required. This award is available only to individual members of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs of not less than four consecutive years of membership.
A two-thirds vote of the Honours Committee is required.'

"This award to Stella was proposed by Josephine Black, who stated that:

'*I propose the candidate for the Honour of ASCCA because her movies are of such excellent quality that they always add enjoyment to the Toronto Film and Video Club program. Many of her movies have won club awards and annual contest awards judged by the Ottawa Movie Club.*'

"This proposal has been endorsed by Fred Briggs and it was submitted to the Honours Committee on August 3rd 2008.
Fred's endorsement reads:

'*Stella Magic became an SCCA Member on June 1st, 1997, and came onto the SCCA Executive in the same year, most likely in Kitchener at the WideAngle 97 Convention in August. From that time till the present, Stella has served the SCCA as Tape Librarian, and has tried very hard to make it work. The concept has been beset with problems including the need to mail tapes around, and the constantly evolving technology. The Video Library began with VHS tapes, evolved to miniDV, and should now be converted to DVD.*
'*Stella began by assembling the collection and cataloguing them all, and published an article in the Autumn PANORAMA that listed 91 Videos. A few have been lent out to members and clubs, but we have been hampered by technical difficulties in duplicating and updating, and the difficulties created by the copyright laws. It is not due to any lack of effort by the candidate that the SCCA Video Library has not been more successful!*
'*Stella dutifully drives from her home in Willowdale to attend the SCCA Executive Meetings, almost every month, unless she is abroad on one of her many tours of remote parts, and she supports and contributes to the SCCA Executive Meetings on all deliberations.*
'*Soon after beginning these visits to Stoney Creek, Stella joined the Hamilton Video/Film Makers where she has had great success screening her videos in competition at regular meetings and in the annual club competition. Stella has also won many awards in the Annual SCCA Competition. It is rare to find people who both assist in the leadership of an organization and successfully produce good videos.*

'*Stella Magic has more than earned the honour of being named an Associate of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs.*'

"I am pleased to announce today that the Honours Committee has unanimously elected Stella Magic Associate of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs."

Unfortunately, Stella wasn't present to accept her ASCCA Certificate, but Richard Ogner, the SCCA Representative for the Toronto Film & Video Club, accepted the Certificate on Stella's behalf, and later delivered it to her home.

At that point, Fred Briggs, as SCCA President, took the podium for another presentation and the following report.

"FELLOWSHIP (FSCCA) QUALIFICATIONS

'*This award shall be made to those holding an Associateship on the basis of outstanding contributions to the advancement of the artistic or technical quality of motion pictures, through such activities as teaching, lecturing, judging, writing, publication of articles, papers, etc., organizational or administrative work, and exceptional personal achievement in producing motion pictures. A very high degree of both service and personal achievement and proficiency in motion picture photography is required. This award is available only to individual members of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs of not less than seven consecutive years of membership.*
A 75% vote of the Honours Committee is required.'

"Proposal - Jim Town

"I have known the candidate for over 18 years and consider the candidate worthy of the honour proposed. I hereby affirm that all statements herein are facts to the best of my knowledge and belief. I have obtained endorsement of the candidate's application, which is enclosed herewith.
"I propose the candidate for the honour of FSCCA upon the basis of the record because:
"-In the past, Thom has served in London Videography Club as President, Secretary, Newsletter editor and Publicity Chairman.
"-He has been one of the few members of that Club who have consistently given of

their time and knowledge to encourage and promote the craft of video production to beginners as well as those with more serious interest in the Craft.
"-I have served several terms on the Board as President and Secretary and have always been able to rely upon Thom for help whenever he was asked.
"-He has been a major contributor for many events requiring camera work both for Club related projects and for those in which I was involved personally.
"-He has been one of three members of the Club who have brought video projectors to meetings so that members could view works of others on the "big screen".
"-It seems that Thom is never too busy that he does not willingly assist others in their pursuit of the Craft.
"-Without Thom, the London Club would not be what it is and along with a handful of others might not even exist today.
"Thom is a most worthy person to receive the honour of Fellow of the SCCA, and if the Committee does not agree with me, there is certainly something amiss.

'Endorsement
'Fred Briggs

"Thom Speechley joined the SCCA in July of 1997, and was appointed to the Executive in 1998 as Membership Chairman. He still continues in that capacity.
"In 1998 and 1999 Thom looked after all the local arrangements for the 1999 London convention, investigating potential sites, costs, facilities, etc., and the many, many details necessary for a successful convention.
"When Don Bradley found the travel required to fulfill his duties as Secretary too difficult for health reasons, and resigned at the AGM in 2000, Thom accepted an appointment to that job, in addition to Membership, until forced because of medical problems to give up the duties of Secretary in the Summer of 2003. We were without a Secretary for a few months until Sandy Whitehouse agreed to take on those duties, but Thom still fills in today as Secretary whenever Sandy is unable to attend meetings because of travel or other reasons.
"Thom was awarded the Honour of Associate of the SCCA at the Brantford Convention in 2003, but he didn't lay back on his laurels. It wasn't very long before Thom was deep into the research, planning,

SCCA ANNUAL VIDEO COMPETITION

CLASS "A" ADVANCED
THE BETTY PETERSON MEMORIAL TROPHY

WINNER
ISLAND TALES
HAROLD COSGROVE

FIRST RUNNER-UP
DANCING FLOWERS
HAROLD COSGROVE

SECOND RUNNER-UP
MY 2007 FALL SHORTS
RICHARD OGNER

CLASS "B" INTERMEDIATE
THE TORONTO FILM & VIDEO TROPHY

WINNER
THE CASE OF THE TOXIC CEMENT
ROBERT H. BAYNE

FIRST RUNNER-UP
CARIBANA PARADE
WAYNE D. SCHALER

CLASS "D" CLUBS' BEST VIDEO
THE GARLICK TROPHY

WINNER
OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE
OTTAWA FILM & VIDEO MAKERS
(by Reinhard Buehling)

CLASS "E" - COMPULSORY THEME
THE INTERCITIES TROPHY

WINNER
A BIRD IN THE HAND
TORONTO FILM & VIDEO CLUB
(by Richard Ogner)

FIRST RUNNER-UP
IT'S FOR THE BIRDS
ROBERT H. BAYNE

SECOND RUNNER-UP
A BIRD IN THE HAND
ROBERT H. BAYNE

THIRD RUNNER-UP
A BIRD IN THE HAND
WAYNE D. SCHALER

CLASS "F" - SCRIPT
THE SCCA AWARD

WINNER
HOW LONG
DAVID FULLER

FIRST RUNNER-UP
IT'S FOR THE BIRDS
ROBERT H. BAYNE

CLASS "C" NOVICE
THE EUMIG TROPHY
NO ENTRY

SCCA ANNUAL VIDEO COMPETITION
SPECIAL AWARDS

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST EDITING IN CONTEST

DAVE'S DAWG'S
DAVID FULLER

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST USE OF SOUND

WHEN I GO TO OTTAWA
ROBERT H. BAYNE

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

MY 2007 FALL SHORTS
RICHARD OGNER

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
BEST SCENARIO VIDEO

THE CASE OF THE TOXIC CEMENT
ROBERT H. BAYNE

ADAM HOUSTON SPECIAL AWARD
BEST DIALOGUE

A BIRD IN THE HAND
ROBERT H. BAYNE

THE OTTAWA CLUB TROPHY
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

ISLAND TALES
HAROLD COSGROVE

THE CALGARY CLUB TROPHY
MOST ORIGINAL ENTRY

CAMERA STROLLER
RICHARD OGNER

THE SCCA TROPHY FOR
MOST HUMOROUS

IT'S FOR THE BIRDS
ROBERT H. BAYNE

THE ALLAN WRIGHT MEMORIAL
BEST TEENAGE ENTRY

NO ENTRY

THE BEN ANDREW'S TROPHY
BEST ENTRY IN THE CONTEST

THE CASE OF THE TOXIC CEMENT
ROBERT H. BAYNE

AMATEUR MOVIE CAPITAL OF CANADA
OTTAWA, ONTARIO

and preparations for the 2005 Convention in Port Stanley, looking after all the local arrangements, finding many of the local area Speakers, providing broad publicity in the London/St. Thomas/Port Stanley area for the very successful 2005 CIAFF Awards Presentation, and running around finding the answer to every question I could ask.

"In looking through past issues of PANORAMA, I was surprised to find that Thom didn't provide anything for publication in our journal until the Summer of 2000, when he presented a report on the Annual General Meeting held in June of that year, one of his very first duties as Secretary. I was surprised because since that time Thom has been so prolific, and it started in the very next issue. As many of our formerly frequent contributors seem to have gone dry, Thom has continually picked up the slack and helped to fill our pages.

"When Joe Bochsler, who took over the Club News Column with the Winter 2001 Issue, found it necessary to retire after the Winter 2006 Issue, Thom agreed to take that on too, starting with the Spring 2006 Issue, and is still doing it.

"Thom is still the Web Master for the London Vidoegraphy Club, and has pioneered many fresh techniques there, some of which have found their way into the new electronic PANORAMA, and he is a great experimenter, always working to push the envelope for the SCCA.

"Many of us may have wondered when we will see some of Thom's videos. Maybe he just doesn't have any need for validation. He may show videos at his home club, but I don't think he enters the SCCA Contests, as least in his own name. I know he is a strong contributor to group efforts, and spends a great deal of time helping others with their projects, even people who are not in either the SCCA or the London Club. And when you get into a discussion of some topic with him, he's likely to present you with a documentary later that he has made on that subject, and you'll have no doubt about his skill."

The Honours Committee, in the absence of their Chairman, unanimously elected Thom Speechley Fellow of the Society of Canadian Cine Amateurs. ∎

Thom Speechley, Carolyn Briggs, Fred Briggs, Sandy Whitehouse, Keith Gloster

Richard Ogner picked up Stella Magic's Award on her behalf, from Thom Speechley

Thom Speechley was presented his Fellowship by Fred Briggs, President
Photos by Joe Bochsler

COFFEE BREAK

HAROLD COSGROVE WITH ONE OF HIS AWARDS

RICHARD OGNER WITH 3
OF HIS 4 AWARDS

HELEN GRUBER & REINHARD BUEHLING WITH
A FEW OF OTTAWA'S 12 AWARDS, & FRIEND

SOME ATTENDEES AT SUPPER

SAMPLES OF 2008 CIAFF AWARDS

PHOTOS BY JOE BOCHSLER

GERALD MEE M.B.E.

In the **Spring 2006 Issue of PANORAMA** (pg 9), we announced that the Board of the SCCA in August 2005 had conferred an Honourary Life Membership (Hon. SCCA) on Gerald Mee, and detailed many of Gerald's accomplishments that led to that Honour. At that time Gerald had already accumulated a great number of Honours, including Fellow of the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers (FACI), Associate of the Royal Photographic Society (ARPS) and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA), and Gerald's long association with the SCCA and his many accomplishments for which the SCCA had honoured him were detailed in that article.

Gerald Mee's name, announcing the Award of Member of the British Empire (MBE), appeared on June 13th, 2008 on the list of the Queen's Birthday Honours. We quote here from the pages of the Leek newspaper, The Sentinel:

MBE FILM MAKER IS THE REAL STAR
by Gary Shenton

"Gerald Mee was on holiday in Portugal when it was officially announced that he had been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. The 82-year-old returned to his home in Spring Gardens, Leek, a few days later to an avalanche of congratulations by post and email - followed by an unrelenting succession of telephone calls.

I'd like to thank everyone for their kindness. I haven't been able to respond to all the messages yet,' he told Your Leek Paper on his return.

Mr. Mee was awarded the MBE for voluntary service to his town's heritage.

Over the last 60 years, he has spent hundreds of hours chronicling the history of Leek, and has also filmed abroad, visiting no fewer than 60 countries.

His skills with a cine camera have gained him numerous national and international awards.

One of his many trips overseas took him to Japan and America to film 'Alpha & Omega' - a record of the War of the Pacific, including the dramatic bombing of Pearl Harbour to the exploding of the Atom Bomb over Hiroshima on August 6th, 1945.

In 1958, he was awarded the Daily Mail Trophy for Amateur Movie of the Year with 'Passport to Paradise', which is about a hotel pianist in Majorca struggling to complete a concerto.

His most treasured compilation about his home town is 'Leek - The First Millennium', which charts the history of the town from the Viking era through to its development as a centre for silk manufacturing and beyond.

Mr. Mee's passion for film-making developed while working with John Martin, in Leek, where he began his career in pharmacy. He graduated from the University of London after studying at Leek High School.

Born and bred in Leek, Mr. Mee's parents kept the Red Lion Hotel in the Market Place until 1946. Gerald inherited it upon the death of his grandmother, Ann Carding-Mee, who first occupied the premises in 1915. The business was eventually sold to Burtonwood Brewery. The family moved to Spring Gardens, where Mr Mee has lived ever since.

Gerald Mee, who is president of Stoke Cine and Video Society, is currently applying the finishing touches to his latest production, 'Leek 800', which celebrates the 800th anniversary of the town being granted a market charter by King John in 1207. It is expected to go on sale during October.

Former Mayor of Leek, Josie Heath, who is chairman of Leek Civic Society, paid a glowing tribute to Mr Mee and his work. 'Gerald is very, very well appreciated not only in Leek but all around the world. He is a very loyal member of the Civic Society and has done lots of wonderful work in recording our town's history,' she said."

On the website of the Stoke Cine and Video Society, Phil Dorman FACI, Editor of their newsletter, reported "The award is for voluntary service to Heritage in Leek. Gerald was nominated by Geoff Mathews for his work in recording on film events showing the life and times of his home town over 60 years *and also for building an archive of films produced in Staffordshire over eighty years."*

Gerald has since been notified that his MBE Investiture by HM the Queen will be on December 18th at Buckingham Palace.

Congratulation, Gerald, from all your friends in Canada. ∎

from one end to the other, in both directions, and starting out whenever they pleased, which they had every right to do! I stood a very long time on that path, and my wife has less patience than I do.

When I discovered 3D Photo Builder by Anything 3D, I was overjoyed. They call this algorithm Intellectual Blending and you can see some very impressive demonstrations on their web site. But as useful as this feature can be, and while this program or another with the same capacity should be in your arsenal, there are other problems that occur far more often, so my quest wasn't over yet. Anything 3D seems to be oriented around producing some very sophisticated 360º pictures, selling turntables and other accessories, but 3D Photo Builder ($60) does a fine job on the "flat" panoramas, and handles exposure differences between the shots well, too.

I know from reading the newsletters from the various clubs, that some people have discovered the marvelous job of the software demonstrated at the University of British Columbia Auto-Stitch site. They offer a free download of software, but it only *demonstrates* how well the software works, and until very recently, there didn't seem to be any way to get my hands on a program with that algorithm. Right now, before reading another word, click on Auto-Stitch above and see how wonderful this program is! It does an absolutely marvelous job of stitching together many pictures horizontally and vertically.

Welcome back! Did you notice the link to the panorama research page? Have a look at that one now to see the hooks in this solution. The software produces magnificent panoramic shots of something with which you aren't very familiar, like a mountain range from a specific position, but not so good when architectural components (i.e. straight lines!) are present! This may be a bad assumption on my part, but if their algorithms can handle that bending of straight lines, they haven't made it clear in their samples. So it's something we'll want to watch.

Did you notice the shading! There isn't any! This technique should do a beautiful job stitching scans of a painting, or a large panorama that you are trying to get into one file so you can produce a "moving pan" for a video. But it doesn't seem to be so useful for shooting a panoramic shot of a city street, the CN Tower, or even an Iroquoian Longhouse!

However, I did follow the trail through some of the Research, and I checked the products of the companies that have licenced the code for their panoramic software.

Let's take the easiest two first: Industrial Light and Magic has licenced it, but they aren't marketing it retail, and even if they did, they'd be far out of our league (I hope you don't mind my speaking for you on this one!). Calico is very reasonably priced, but it only works on Mac's. I'm not prejudiced, but I can't recommend it if I can't try it, so I'll have to leave it to someone who can test it to give us his opinion on that software.

That leaves Serif Panorama Plus and Autopano Pro.

Serif is rather an unusual software company. Since last Spring, I've been putting PANORAMA out on Serif's PagePlus X3, and while this software was unlike anything I've ever used before, I'm getting the hang of it, and find it economical and quite capable. The company seems to operate on an unusual, but not unheard of, business plan. First they offer you a program that, while it isn't their most current, is at a price you can't refuse. Then they offer you an update, again at a price you can't turn down. Now that they have you hooked, there are repeated offers of other software, all at low prices, and often accompanied with additional "bundles" at even lower prices. I've accumulated a great deal of their wares, and "great deal" are the operative words. I certainly don't bite on all the bait, of course, and I had just made a purchase and turned down the extra,

specially priced addition to the bundle, when I saw that Serif PanoramaPlus 3 supposedly had the UBC Autostitch and was available for $50. I phoned Serif to be sure that this edition of the PanoramaPlus 3 program did indeed have the facility that interested me, and they immediately offered to add it to my last order, as part of the bundle, for $20.

It's certainly worth the price I paid for it, even the normal $50 asking price! There's absolutely no problem with shading. It's capable of producing 360º Panoramas, QuickTime VR movies, and the flat, straight, panorama views that I want and I assume that you want, too. The program runs very easily but it can't handle the moved objects (though there may be another way to handle this problem to be described below), and the pair of shots of the people on the path in the 3D Photo Builder couldn't even be recognized as a panorama pair by Serif's PanoramaPlus 3.

There are a couple of other problems that plague stitching of photos made with cameras. One is parallax and the other is barrel/pincushion distortion. Both can be illustrated with one example from life.

I needed to photograph a long painting of the public school that I attended that was later leased to a new college for four years while they built their campus on another site. The picture was in a wooden frame and was hanging on a wall in the main corridor of the new college. Because of the wall behind me I couldn't get far enough from the painting to get it all in one shot – in fact, I needed four shots to be sure to get the whole length with sufficient overlaps to let the software stitch them all together. (In the end only three of them were actually needed.)

With the camera on a tripod placed opposite the center of the painting, and apparently a little lower than the horizontal centre line, I shot first the left end, then a couple overlapping the centre, and then the right end. This produced a parallax problem in which the top and bottom frame are approximately parallel at the center of the picture and move closer together as they approach each end. In addition, both end frames taper closer to each other as they near the top of the painting. That's the parallax problem.
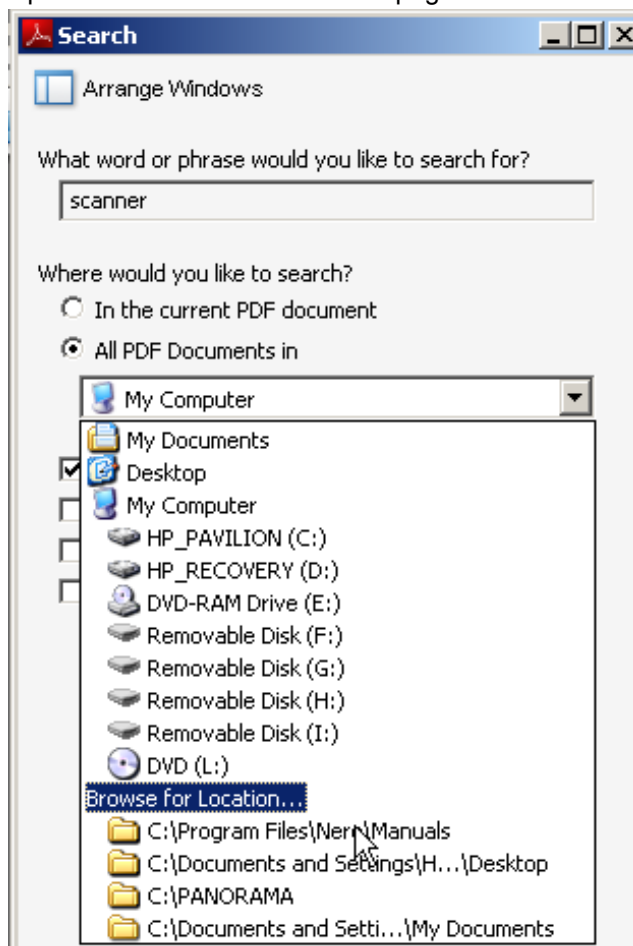
Cheerful Note – In the last issue, I warned about being scammed by fraudulent software posing as antivirus programs**.** The current threat was a product called AntiVirus 2008XP. Since then the creator has been caught and charged. You can read about it **here** and at the same time learn about ways to protect yourself from such activities.
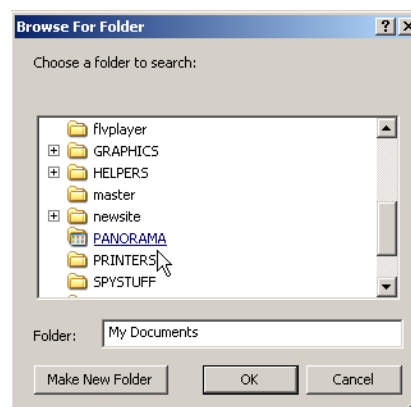
Finding Things – It's very easy to accumulate a tremendous amount of data and files on your hard drive if you do any amount of surfing. Few of us are sufficiently well disciplined to take the time to catalog and file material so that it is easily recovered. All operating systems are equipped with a "search" feature, which provides some help, but often take a lot of time, even when you use the correct 'key word'. Fred Briggs, who confesses to owning a rather chaotic filing system spread over *five* drives, has found what appears to be an excellent solution to the problem. A program called "Everything" will create a database of all files and folders on all NTFS drives in your system in a matter of seconds. 1,000,000 files will be cataloged in less than a minute. FAT 32 drives will have to be converted if you want them included. Search results display almost instantaneously. The search feature of a typical OS (Windows) must rescan an entire drive each time you use it to find the desired file, unless you can "guess" where the file might be and spend a minute or so telling the program which drive and/or directory to scan. "Everything" automatically updates the data each time you use it. And incidentally, "Everything" means just that. It even looks for folders you have created in your e-mail program. "Everything" only looks for words in the name of files and folders. Unlike Windows *advanced* options, it does not read files looking for words. If you check the Q&A page at the **Everything website**, you will find a guide for a very extensive list of alternative search switches and operators. The program is a free **download**.

Searching PANORAMA – We hope (and trust) that many of you are downloading and saving back issues of PANORAMA. If you do, the following suggestion will save you having to revisit the website each time you want to refer to a particular article or research a specific subject. These instructions are for Windows PC but can be easily adapted for other operating systems since most of the options are with the Adobe Reader. Place all downloaded copies of Panorama in a single folder on your desktop. Open any issue in that folder in Adobe Reader and at the top of the page, enter the word to be searched for. (Example: scanner) Then click the down arrow beside the search box and select "Open Full Reader Search"
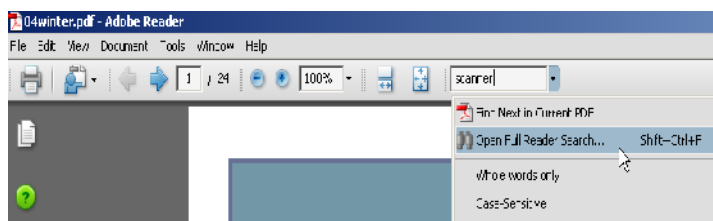
In the new window, select "All PDF Documents in". Click the down arrow beside the select box and scroll down and click "Browse for Location". In the next smaller window which opens as "Desktop" scroll down and select "Panorama", the folder you have created and then click "OK". Now, click the Search" button. The search window will display every incident of the selected word. Clicking on any item will open the appropriate document at the desired page.
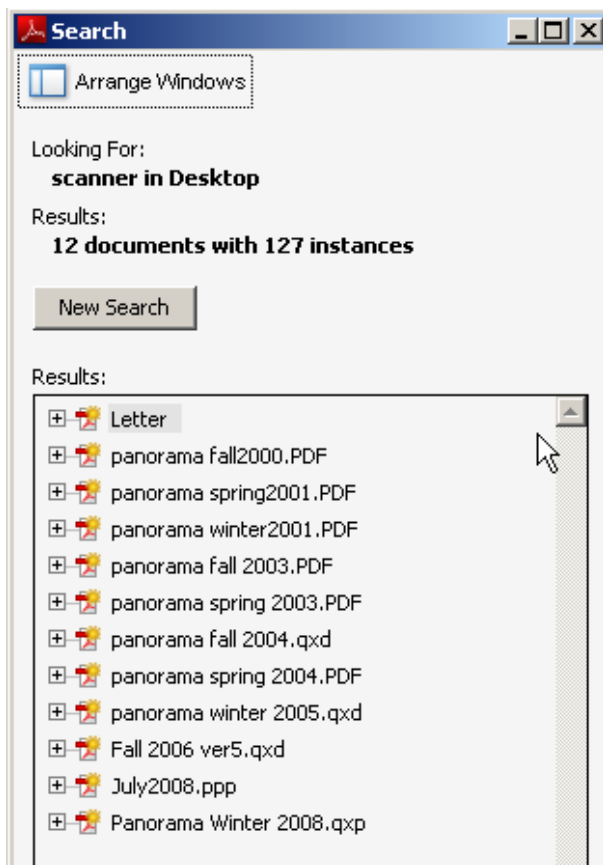
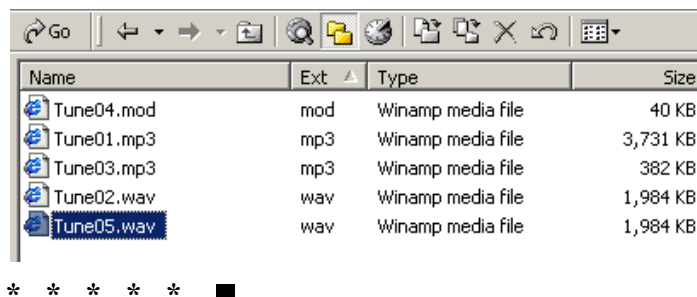**Full Reader Search**

Browse for Folder

All references to 'scanner' found in all issues

Unfortunately, this procedure will not work while browsing at the webpage. In that instance, you will have to search each issue separately. That's why we recommend downloading them all and keeping them on your hard drive for quick reference.

Catch That Tune – Many issues ago, I mentioned a program for capturing streaming music from the Internet. That program, "Super MP3 Recorder" is still available for purchase by download. It's very versatile and offers many options for format and quality of the captured audio. More recently I found a freeware program which will perform the same function but in a somewhat limited way. "Fast Recorder" will capture any audio moving through your sound card at any time. When you open it, it resides as a red button in your task bar. If you are listening to a streaming radio site or perhaps a podcast, you simply click the button and it begins to record. The only preparation is to select a location for saving the file and running a quick check to adjust the record level of your audio card. (I.e.: The volume control on the task bar of Windows.) FastRecorder only records in wav format but since there is no compression, you can convert to any preferred format without loss of quality. Free Download
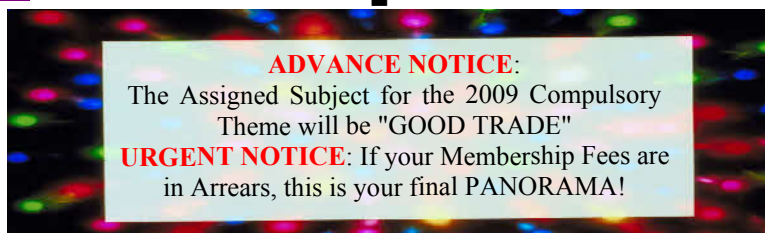

Sorting Files – Windows XP - I don't know if you ever noticed but the Windows XP 'explorer', the page in which you view folders, has dropped the sorting option for file 'extension'. Instead, files are listed in a column called 'type'. Unfortunately, depending on how your files are associated with other programs, *type* may not always be the same as *extension*. So if you are moving files from one folder to another or, moving to a CD-ROM, it may not be possible to sort them into appropriate groups. I had this problem with image files in TIFF and JPG formats each with the same name. Windows XP simply grouped them in alphabetical order and I had to transfer them, one at a time to different folders. Then I discovered a small, free utility, which allows you to add a column for extension to any folder. It is called "**cpext**" and available. There is also a handy installation guide.

* * * * * ■

Among the valuable articles in this issue is a report that the book "Creative Video Sound", reviewed in the June issue, is now available in an English version. The author provides a method of 'designing' the sound scheme for a film or video, using symbolic diagrams and layouts. This is a rather unique approach, which could add more control to the video creator's resources. In another article, Mike Shaw reviews the latest version of the German editing program, "Magix Pro 14". Mike concludes that despite a rather overcrowded interface, the product is very good value for the money. Prices in North America appear to be in the $90-100 range for the packaged product and about $50 for the downloaded version. Mike routinely uses the Avid Liquid Pro 7.2 I think we can trust his judgement in this review.

Tom Hardwick, in his usual detailed manner, discusses flare, as both a defect to be avoided but also as a creative element. He recommends that any flare be added in postproduction rather than trying to get the effect in-camera so that if you don't like the effect, you can remove it. Tom also reviews the old question of buying a second camera to use as deck, thus sparing your regular camera. His argument is that unless you can justify two cameras for multi-camera shoots, it makes more sense to get the most out of a single camera and save the difference towards the "upgrade" which you will eventually be buying due to obsolescence. A very thought provoking analysis. ■

RAY'S BACK!
ZEPHYRS STUDIOS

The older we get, the more we enjoy stumbling over long lost old friends!

Veteran members of the Hamilton Video/Film Makers, and some others from the SCCA who may remember him from his submissions to the SCCA Annual Competitions, will be pleased to hear that Ray Bayliss is "back in business". Not literally, of course: to the best of my knowledge, Ray never even entertained the notion of making a living out of his hobby, but Ray married, went into a merchandising business with his wife, dropped out of the Hamilton Video/Film Makers, and apparently gave up his hobby (not necessarily all in that order) several years ago.

Many of our members are recognized for their beautiful travel films or videos, mainly shot on vacations to foreign lands. Not Ray! I don't even know if he ever got very far from Hamilton, and "pretty pictures" weren't his thing. Ray was CREATIVE!

Many club members "ooo" over beautiful cinematography, nice landscapes, cityscapes, gardens, flowers, etc., all accompanied by soothing music, and that view's quite common even among judges, who should be better than that. (I'm not saying that beauty is bad, just not *everything*!) None of that was Ray, and often, in my view, Ray's talents weren't properly appreciated.

Ray made story films! Science Fiction! Horror! Twilight Zone stuff! Lots of Special Effects. Occasionally he made a Drama, a Music Video, or a Comedy, but whatever he did, he was Creative!

There were, and are, others with this creativity. I don't profess to know them all, but I've seen this creativity recently in the Brantford and Hamilton Clubs (Alex Szatmary), London Club (Kim Brown), the Ottawa Club (Robert Bayne), and the Toronto Club (Richard Ogner). They're not all the same, of course. In fact, they're all different, so nothing said about one should be taken to be about any of the others. Many of their videos are excellent, but others aren't without problems – an unsatisfy-

ing story, poor acting, or even sometimes, pointless, but you can't deny that they have something that most of us don't – imagination, creativity, or at the very least, a fresh approach!

Many of these videos illustrate a willingness, or eagerness, to experiment with computers. So did Ray, about fifteen years ago! Another of his hallmarks was his ability to scout out unusual locations for his films and use them in a way that even those who knew the spots well, didn't recognize them.

Now you can see Ray's works again, or for the first time! Ray sent me an email tipping me that he's on **You-Tube**! I think he told me because I'm in some of his videos!

So are some other members of the Hamilton Club. HV/FM members will be pleased to see Les and Minnie Carter, and even Alan Wright in a cameo performance. They, and Carolyn and I never turned him down when he asked us to act in one of his films, no matter what it was we had to do. You'll see what I mean at **his YouTube home**. (I also think he asked me so often because I had so many suits! Whenever he wanted someone in a suit, he called on me. But he also put me into some very outlandish get-ups for space films!)

If you click on the photo of the distorted face (cf The Scream!) that Ray has used to represent himself, you can read a short profile. For those who have trouble finding this, I quote:

"*Started making Super 8 movies from '81 to '87. Switched to Regular VHS from '88 to '95. SVHS from '96 onward. Haven't done much in 12 years except transferring movies to digital and cleaning them up digitally. Now using miniDV.*"

YouTube has a trick that I find hard to navigate. Every time you look at a video it brings up others with a similar theme, title, or something else, like subject matter. This makes it hard to go methodically through all his videos, but if you start at the page with the complete listing of all his submissions, and always go back to that page with

the "back button" (clicking once or twice, depending on the browser you're using) and select the next video from that original page, you can see them all. If you get lost somehow (and it isn't hard) you can find the page again by using the YouTube Search for "45182" (Ray's Handle or User Name) and you'll be back to the page again. By the way, there is one video that shouldn't be there, an ad from Lexus of Bellevue, Washington, featuring a 2002 Volvo for Sale! It seems to be there in error, so you can skip that one!

In addition, a few of the videos show up more than once on the list, and the last time I looked (tonight!) *The Price Pt 1* didn't show up, but if you click on *The Price Pt 2*, when the video starts and you look at the List of Related Videos in the Right Hand Column, you'll see that Pt 1 is listed. If you click on that immediately you can see Pt 1 before Pt 2 (obviously the best way to watch a movie!)

It's interesting that the Number of Viewings is shown for each video, and it's evident from the Number of Viewings and the Time/Length of each that today's visitors to YouTube (displaying the short attention span exhibited by today's TV and Internet generation) look for the shortest videos to get a quick idea about what the video maker is like, and if they don't like the short ones, they don't give the longer ones a chance! This is particularly clear on those three longer videos that he had to break up into two parts because they exceeded the time limits allowed by YouTube. Many viewers have watched at least part of the first half of a video, but not looked at any of the second half. Our readers, with a strong interest in film making, will watch them all the way through, even if it's just to see the Credits! There are currently about 40 videos as I write this, but some are very short!

It's clear that videos originated and edited on VHS haven't made a very good transition to the YouTube screen, and those shot in very low light (a favourite condition for Ray) have suffered the most. But the creativity shows through it all, making it well worth the visit.

Maybe some of us will be inspired to exhibit our own videos this way! One can always hope. F. Briggs ∎

SIN CITY: THE GAME
FRANK MILLER'S SIN CITY

by Fred Briggs

Many years ago I mentioned a member of the Hamilton Movie Makers (now long dead) who often announced proudly that he hadn't seen a Hollywood film for many years. I don't remember the film that he named as the last, but I do remember that it was a great film – an old classic by that time. His reasoning was that he enjoyed making his own films (and they *were* films – video for amateurs had not yet been introduced) and there was nothing he could learn from the professionals.

I was astounded! Can you imagine a writer bragging that he had not read a book for the past twenty years? Reading the works of Masters is one of the two ways that writers get better, with the other being writing itself.

In those days Movie Maker Magazine in the UK used to review films that had been released on Super8, for two very good reasons. First, films on video were not yet available, and Super 8 prints were all that we had for home study. Secondly, in South Africa, there was no television, so there was no second chance to see a film after it had its run in the theatres, so South Africans were big consumers of full length Super 8 copies of Hollywood films. They were very expensive, so the potential buyer wanted to know if it was worth the outlay.

We had several TV stations in my home town, and there were oodles of reruns of older films, so I wasn't among the "early adopters" when home video players became available. Videos could be purchased for about $120, and video rental companies sprang up all over. In those early days you paid a membership fee to belong, perhaps every two or three months, and a lot more for each rental than you do now. I especially remember paying a regular membership fee to one such company, who a few months later offered an upgrade to a much longer term membership, (five years, I think) for about the price of a two-year membership. I was among those who jumped on the deal, and by the end of

the month the company went bankrupt and closed their doors! This was one of the reasons that when video making began to be a part of the Hamilton Movie Club, I pushed for Hamilton Video/Film Makers as our new name instead of Hamilton Video Club, as "video club" had left a bad taste in a lot of mouths here. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I didn't buy a video player until SONY introduced the very high quality Betamax player that allowed me to play a section of a video in slow motion at various speeds, and even stop the motion and single frame through something very interesting, all without "hash". (That wasn't the right term, but I can't recall at the moment what we called the noise and steaks that appeared on VHS machines when you varied the speed or looked at a still frame.) I still remember a scene in which a man opened the door of his car, which blew up and hurled him through the air backwards. By rocking back and forth in single frame I was able to determine the exact moment when the edit was made between the shot of the man opening the door, and the second shot of the explosion that blew away the dummy. The camera, of course was locked down on a tripod. I could do that! Well, maybe not with an explosion. The authorities would frown at that!

I also remember running through scenes at higher speed (without sound) to study "blocking". The actors move around their "stage" a great deal more in professional films than in amateur productions! We tend not to notice things like that because we get interested in the story, instead of the film making, but speeding up the action, and muting the sound, helps us study how the pros put a film together.

Sometimes I still count off the timing of the short cuts, or play back a scene several times to watch the use of the action line, or alternating angles, cutting on action, or other features of professional filming, in an effort to improve my own work.

And now that I've embarked on my monumental video history documentary (I think I've mentioned that before), I study an awful lot of documentaries for new and fresh ideas that I can pinch and apply in my own epic to vary the pace, the style, and anything else, in an effort to hold the audience's interest.

All the above preamble is to justify a "film review" here, and others in the future.

I have a 67" HD Samsung Television (as many of you know) and there are so many channels available on my cable that I almost always choose my programming from the very extensive menu provided, but late one Saturday evening there just didn't seem to be anything interesting. There are always movies and programs with names I don't recognize, and by the time I can check out each of them to see what it is, we've moved into the next time slot and I have to start again, so I did something I very rarely do – I started flicking briefly through every channel, looking for something that would catch my eye. (Unlike most homes, it's my wife they uses that procedure, so we usually watch TV in different rooms!) And I found something so remarkable that I soon knew that I had to tell you all about it.

This film was so beautifully lit and shot in *film noir* style that I had to bring it to everyone's attention, and that continued throughout the entire film. But I know that most of you will hate it. The film is excruciatingly violent, and it was all I could do to sit through it. I had missed some of it, of course, so I had to rent it to see it all from the beginning.

I had seen the title, *Sin City*, in the menu, but assumed it was just another drama about Las Vegas. This film is based on what we used to call a comic book, but now this product is termed "Graphic Novels", and it isn't kids who buy them (I sincerely hope) but young adults, and possibly even older individuals than that.

Many years ago it occurred to me that comic books might be a good source of material for an amateur video. Characters aren't copyrighted, and neither are titles. If you're looking for a good plotline, how about the classics? How about "Classic Comics"? The original material is out of copyright, the stories are proven winners, and someone has already done all the work

of condensing it down to a length suitable for a short amateur video! And beyond that, while you wouldn't have to adhere religiously to the version shown in the comic book, there will be excellent "suggestions" of camera angles, compositions, etc., because, if nothing else, comic books are visually dramatic, and they come with a possible story board! The spoken verbiage and the short descriptions (or narration, in the video) could be replaced by the exact (and eloquent) words in the original book, to avoid transgressing on the comic book's copyright.

I immediately drove into Hamilton to the biggest comic book store in town and asked if they had any "Classic Comics". Unfortunately, they didn't. Remarkably, the owner informed me that there was to be a "Paper Show" the following weekend in Toronto!

I attended, of course, and racing against the throng of collectors present, finished up with fifty comics (you have to draw the line somewhere!) originally costing 15¢ or 25¢, but for which I paid $3 or $4 each (but they're worth more now!). A few were original editions, but most were later editions by the same company. Practicality ruled out many (*Gulliver's Travels*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, etc.) and I finally settled on *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Julius Caesar* as my best bets, with the former mostly requiring a forested natural landscape, and the latter requiring a number of buildings that can be found, or faked, in Hamilton with its large Italian population. I never made either video because there was always something more pressing, but I did go so far as to fall off the **wall** in Buffalo scouting for a location and ripping open my pant leg, and *my* leg, at the **Albright Knox Art Gallery**!

Hollywood, of course, has used many comic books as inspiration for films, with *Popeye*, *Dick Tracy*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *The Hulk*, *Spiderman*, and many others as examples, but never as accurately as in *Sin City*.

This is an all live action film, starring Bruce Willis and Mickey Rourke, and Co-Directed by Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller, who wrote the three Sin City episodes that have been interwoven in the Miramax film.

Almost all of the film is shot in the dark, with comic book style backlighting delineating everything. Mostly the film is black and white, except for a few touches of colour; the red Ferrari, the red lips of the female victim, and most often, the red of the blood! This film is extremely violent, and I expect very few of our members (read "none") will enjoy it. Not only are there a lot of tough guys who keep on walking as the bullets fly through them, but there are touches of pedophilia and cannibalism (not as explicit as the violence, thanks) but it

makes you wonder about the sick mind that conceived it, and all those fans who buy up the series of graphic novels.

Still, you have to see for yourself why Quentin Tarantino hung around the set watching them work, to the point that he was given an opportunity to direct one of the scenes! Go to some of the web sites about this movie, and then rent it. You don't want to just see it on TV. You want to be able to stop it and see some things more than once. And especially, you want to see the *Behind the Scenes* segment (that you won't get over TV) and hear how Miller, who had had one disappointment over a film made from one of his books, didn't want any part of

the project. Rodriguez convinced him to go to Texas for a one-day test shooting, and after Rodriguez shot an entire three-page short story in ten hours, Miller was onboard, and after Bruce Willis saw about one-minute of the test, he jumped at the chance to do the film. See that segment first, and you may have seen enough. Or you may want to see the entire film. I did, and while some parts of it were hard to watch, I watched it right through!

Not all lessons are learned easily, or in comfort!

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I was later lucky enough to get a copy (from the Public Library, no less, of the Extended Version with the Director's Cut of the film (including the scenes that had been removed for a theatre audience) and a choice of 3 Commentaries to accompany the film – Robert. Rodriguez and Frank Miller, R. Rodgriguez and Quentin Tarantino, or the Audience Reaction at the Premiere in Austin Texas to give you an opportunity to hear it with a theatre audience. It was heavy on the applause, with a lot of yahoos whisting and hollering . This was obviously a large group of Frank Miller Graphic Novels Fans, as they cheered the Logo wildly. There was an excellent short about the props they used, and all those cool cars he uses in his comic strips were alone worth the effort. It's much better to rent films now instead of watching them on the tube, where often they don't even show the credits full size – just in a small panel beside the commercials!

By the way, if you frequent your local video rental outlet you may find that they only stock recent releases and the big blockbusters. I'm interested in a wider variety of films so I rent from **Cinemail.ca** on a monthly plan. I order from a large cartalogue online, and they mail them to me. You may want to check out their website for details.

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After completing this article, while working on another, I stumbled on an article that appeared in Time, March 2006, about **Robert Rodriguez** and the digital film revolution. This is well worth a read!   (Time's articles online are spread over several pages – 6 on this one – so don't forget to click on "Next" to read it all!)

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I also used the camera at the default (widest) setting of the focal length of the lens (those little electric levers are so coarse when you only have a 3X zoom!) in order to get the picture in, and as a result, the frames that should be straight as arrows, are bent. When three or four pictures are stitched together the barrel distortion from the wide angle lens produces wavy strips of wood, arching away from the centre line in both ends and closer together in the center, but the top center and bottom center aren't centered, if you know what I mean. On top of that, the end pieces curve outward in their middles, and the right end leans in at the top more than does the left end.

The program does provide a means of straightening lines, but I found that it didn't straighten the curved lines: it merely raised or lowered one end of the picture!

Cropping the picture might make the distortions less noticeable, and I realize that this is a very demanding circumstance. (That's why I chose it to demonstrate the parallax and barrel distortion problems!)

Panoramas of three to five shots taken outside on the grounds were very satisfactory *except that* the road in the foreground is curved and I think it was a straight road (but I'm not sure). This is the result of standing in one spot and turning through an arc to take the pictures. The nice thing about this program is you can give it nine pictures out of order and it can find the two that make one picture and the seven that make the other and get them all in order. Smooth!

Autopano Pro is a winner in all departments! It has the marvelous UBC Autostitch algorithm that produces excellent alignments and blending, plus it has a great many additional features!

There is a 43 page User Manual (compared to the bare bones help file for Serif's PanoramaPlus 3) that you can download from their Documentation Page, from where you can also access a great deal of background information about projection modes, dy-

namic range, interpolation and blenders, very detailed step by step instructions for using the program, tutorials about special applications like using the program as an Astronomy Stacker, Bracketed Panoramas, Painting and Artwork Reproduction, Extended Depth of Field, and including *five* videos on Your First Panorama, How to Straighten a Panorama, How to Use Fisheye Detection, Manual Stitching, and Manual Correction of Moving Objects. The program has an integrated Smartblend ghost-remover that usually handles the latter automatically, but this information is supplied for special cases in which it may not work satisfactorily, and the manual method may even work in other stitching programs that don't have this feature, but you will need to have Photoshop with the capability to "Erase" to transparency. If you have that already, Bob's your Uncle!

With all this information available to you with a click of your mouse, there's no need for me to rattle on any longer, but I would like to point out a couple of things.

Most digital cameras record information about each picture in an EXIF file that is attached to the picture. One data item is the focal length of your zoom lens for that picture, and Autopano Pro will automatically recover that information and use it to correct barrel or pin cushion distortion! It also has tools for easily switching between various projections (usually we will want planar projection), adjusting to the vertical those lines that should be vertical, to the horizontal those lines that should be horizontal, and adjustment of yaw, pitch and roll. Here you have a tool that will produce architecturally correct photos with your digital camera that in the past could only be made with swing back view cameras, generally only used by professionals who had to shoot photos of buildings! Now you can correct not only horizontal panoramas, but vertical panoramas of tall buildings!

This program is priced higher than its competitors (actually, I don't think it has any competitors) at 99 Euros. When I first found it, our dollar was

increasing and I was waiting for a better exchange rate. Then my computers crashed. Then the Stock Market and the World Economy crashed! Everything is fluctuating violently and I'm waiting for a better time. Today it's still about C$157, plus the Currency Exchange charged by Pay Pal, so I'm still waiting. If you find a better program for less money, please let me know. I'm still using the Trial Version that is watermarked and doesn't let me save a file, but I'm going to have to bite that bullet soon!

Meanwhile, in January I expect to get back on track regarding turning video into animated paintings! ■

BREAKING NEWS .... & UPDATES

Right now there's a lot of news on the 3D front. It seems that everybody that was working on it has decided they better hurry up or they'll be left behind. Here's a sampling, not all exactly breaking news, but all in 2008 & relevant, with the latest first and recent background following!

NFL to Test Live 3D HD Broadcast

High-definition TV in 3 dimensions and no glasses

Panasonic shows world's first 3D Full HD Plasma Home Theatre

Fujifilm pushes consumer 3-D camera

Can Hollywood bring #DTV home?

TV giants are flatliners in stereo 3D patents

L.A. lab forms 3DTV group

Hollywood gears up 3D TV effort

Big turnout planned for 3DTV meeting

3D Displays

Stereoscopic 3D content for the home unveiled at NAB

Intel may drive 'PC-ification' of stereo 3-D

Group peers into 3-D future for Blu-Ray

3-D TV not ready for prime time

Bye Bye HD!

Live From London: 32 million pixel Super Hi-Vision

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