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## Life @ Work

That 'Owner's pride thingy'!

### Part - I

There are lots of things in life that you can absolutely live without - but how many of us resist the temptation to own something that we can do without... Hardly anyone! That's the beauty of style accessories - those who have them can never do without them and those who don't, will always rubbish the whole idea while secretly coveting them! But seriously, who needs these thingies anyways? We think film & video editors could do with a little more class and comfort [yeah right!]. Its such a dreary existence for these guys in there [you know, those 5 x 5 cubby holes with just a 'yawning' gap between the walls!] that we had to come up with some stuff which at the least will leave them with a bit of humour at the end of the day! To begin with, these thingies are not just style symbols. They are powerful and efficient and yes, their mere presence in the room does wonders to your self-esteem! You just might end up entertaining more visitors than you ever have and you might also want to do something about that indulgent smile that will pop up each time someone says 'wow'! One last thing - forget having all these in your 5 x 5... you need at least a 20 x 20 to do justice to them!

### Contour Shuttle Pro



When a friend bought a Final Cut Pro system, nearly a year ago, the dealer showed him a small device he called a 'Shuttle Pro' - made by a company called Contour Designs. I had seen it on the 'net and read some reviews. But seeing

"in real" made it look surprisingly small, and light.

I plugged it in the USB socket that's thoughtfully provided behind the Apple LCD monitor and loaded up a small program on an accompanying CD which thoughtfully had a Mac installation. It worked.

The CSP (Contour Shuttle Pro) is a small silver plastic gadget [it's now available in black too] - about 7 inches long, 3 inches wide and 1/2 inch high. At the top are 8 buttons, which you can program inside any application. Below is a rotating knob with another rotating knob inside it. Concentric, if you recollect your school geometry.

All this comes into use when you open an editing application. Click in the source monitor, and turn the shuttle button clockwise (to the right for those brought up on digital watches) the clip starts playing. The more you turn the shuttle knob the faster it plays. If you bring it to the centre detent position, it pauses. Turn it anti-clockwise (to the left for those brought up on digital watches) and the clip plays backwards. Again more turn, faster backwards. Concentric to this shuttle knob is the jog wheel. This turned with one finger. And it steps the video forward or backwards frame by frame.

This exact same functionality works in the timeline too. Meaning "same to same"

Now, for those who have never operated a Steinbeck or U-matic or Beta machine's "search knob" will probably never know that for decades, this was what constituted an "editing interface".

The top 8 buttons can be programmed to work as play, ff, rew, stop, mark in, mark out, cut and lift or any 8 editing functions you use the most. The four buttons at the bottom can be programmed to select the source, record monitor, timeline or project window or any 4 frequently used functions. In Final Cut Pro you can use these to select Browser, Viewer Canvas Timeline.

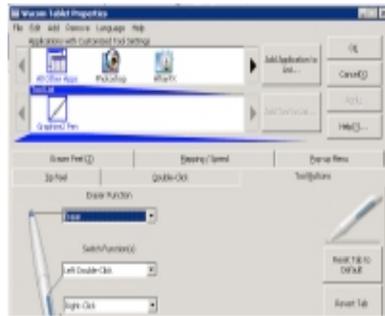
I used the CSP extensively - mainly during logging, when you want to be able to quickly home in on a frame, to mark or make subclips. It shuttles quite fast - may be a bit too fast if you're used to the mechanical delay of a tape machine. I wish they'd let you program this delay, just to "feel right". I tried using it during log and capture, with a DV camcorder but a DV camcorder's shuttle mechanism is very slow so at times you don't know which direction you're going. With a Betacam deck it works fine, though a bit fast compared to the Betacam's search knob.

CSP falls in that group of devices which you can spend an entire life not knowing about. But once you make a casual acquaintance, and touch and feel them you can either fall madly in love with, or keep a safe distance from. If possible check out this device. You can get used to it. CSP costs about US\$110

& CSP-V.2 costs about US\$130.

In a very warped sense, the Contour Shuttle Pro is like bell-bottoms. A rage in it's time, passé for a while, then back with a bang. Next week, we'll look at side-burns.

## Wacom Graphire 2



Some months ago I had a large animation project staring in the face. And doing complex Photoshop touchups and cloning with a mouse over many months can cause injuries which Mediclaim doesn't cover. I had seen and used Wacom tablets before but was generally fearful of their cost.

So one morning I summoned some courage and casually inquired with a friendly local Apple dealer about the Graphire 2 - 4"x5", the smallest one I could find. He said Rs 6200 and before the sun set that day, a Wacom Graphire 2 was in my hand. I happened to be editing on an

Apple PowerBook that day. So I plugged it into the USB port of the PowerBook. And it worked. Just like that! Some companies call this plug and play.

I took it home and connected it to my Athlon PC. Win 2000 recognized it as a "Human Interface Device". I popped in the CDs that came with it and was ready to go.

The Graphire consists of a small plastic pad called "tablet" with a rectangle printed on it. This is your "business area". And then there is a "pen". The rectangle on the tablet is like a representation of your monitor. Wherever you point the pen in the said rectangle, the mouse will move accordingly on the said monitor. What is unsaid is that this motion is absolute. Meaning if you point at the top left of the rectangle the cursor is at the top left of your monitor. If you lift the pen about 4 cm above the said rectangle and move it and place it at the bottom left of the rectangle, your cursor snaps to the new position. Exactly as if you were working on a sheet of paper. Even the pen is held just like you hold a normal pen. So it is very precise when drawing or painting.

The pen is pressure sensitive. The harder you press the darker the line. Again just like paper and pen. This is especially good for the eraser and brush work and you find yourself adjusting brush size less often.

In other general work on a computer too, the Wacom is useful. So much so that I used it as my primary pointing device in one Final Cut Pro system. Trimming and adjusting effects is more precise with a Wacom.

To click, you just tap the pen lightly on the tablet. Double-click is achieved by, you guessed right, a double tap on the tablet. The pen also has two buttons on it. You can configure one as right-click the other as double click so you have less tapping to do.

And only the pen from Wacom works. Your finger, a ball pen, a fountain pen, safety pin, paper clip, Frooti straw, MacDonald's straw, ear bud... nothing and nothing works but the pen from Wacom. And it can break if you step on it, or if a BEST bus goes over it. So don't drop it. Even if you do, make sure a bus doesn't go over it.

A new Wacom can now be bought from baazee.com For Rs 5000 for a 4x5 and Rs 11500 for a 5x7. 4x5 works for up to 17" monitor, while 5x7 is for a larger or two monitors.

Now, unlike the above two, the rest of the 'thingies' [including the ones that will be featured in Part-II of this article] have not been used extensively by any one of us - to be frank, a couple of them, we haven't even seen in 'real'. So, please consider this statement as a legal disclaimer. But yes, we have talked to people who have used these 'thingies' and have gathered a more than sufficient account of what they are and what they are capable of.

## Apple HD Cinema Display



This is easily the mother of all displays or father, depending on which part of the world you come from. The couple of times I was fortunate to take a look at it, I stood almost transfixed to the ground for a long long time. It was beautiful, stunning, amazing, marvelous and just simply too much - I knew I would run out of superlatives! This one is definitely a head-turner.

Now in more technical terms, it's got a 23 inch [viewable] TFT active-matrix liquid display that supports 1920 x 1200 pixel resolution! Isn't it true that technicalities spoil the fun? But, these specs are indicative of what HD Cinema Display is capable of doing in your editing room. With more than 2.3 million pixels and wide-screen display format, this work-of-art plays HD resolution video without any distortion and with the best of clarity. It also has customizable color profiles and color-tone fidelity is supposed to be simply unrivalled. Many experts believe that HD Display is way ahead of any of the

monitors made by other companies - even IBM! No wonder they don't call it a 'monitor' - it's a true 'display'.

Till recently, the Cinema Display could only be connected to a Mac machine - that is, a G4 or G5 - through a single cable called ADC, acronym for 'Apple Display Connector', which carries power, USB [and a two-port self powered USB hub to which you can connect more peripherals] and digital graphics - simply amazing for its simplicity and performance. Now even the PC users could actually hope to connect the Cinema Display to their machines using a little third-party connector called, 'Dr. Bott's DVIator'. DVIator has already been tested for ATI Radeon cards on PC and many other graphic cards seem to have yielded good results on PC when connected to the HD Cinema Display. The connector comes for about US\$100.

Back to HD Cinema Display - at US\$1999 [about INR 1, 50,000/- in India with taxes], many may hesitate or reject the option. But 'yours truly' believes that some half a dozen new clients might migrate to your studio just to have look at this one - the decision of course, is yours 😊

**Neil Sadwelkar** with a bit of help from **Bimal Unnikrishnan**

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