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# PANORAMA

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SUR LE FILM ET VIDEO AMATEUR



## Art-Scan, Jetsoft, and Teething Problems

In the most recent PANORAMA, in my HOT LINKS article on WinMorph & Wax, I as much as promised you a report in this issue about a "Killer App" for Home Video. Unfortunately, my tests didn't pan out as hoped. The idea was to use Virtual Dub Filters through Wax, because Virtual Dub itself isn't yet capable of handling the miniDV format, which most of us now use for our video editing.

Every time I tried to use the filters in which there would be the most interest, the program crashed! I spent several hours on this problem, and haven't got to the bottom of it yet. Unfortunately, there were other demands on my time, from preparing Financial Statements for the Auditor and getting everything ready for our AGM and Eastern Regional Meeting, to a two-week vacation away from home, for the first time in ten years! I will return to the tests though, because I'm sure that many of us would be interested in the promise: transferring 8mm. and 16mm. film to video, even with sound tracks, at the same speed as they were originally shot, and then removing the flicker, hotspot, splices, dust and dirt, and even adjusting brightness, sharpening and colour correcting, all with free software. Sounds good, eh, ... if it works!

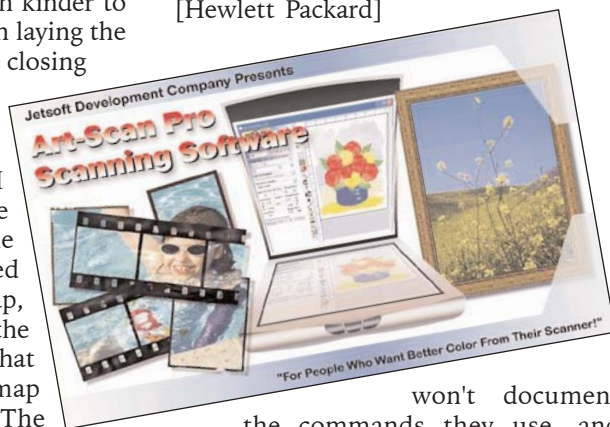
One of the items vying for my time was a new scanner I had purchased. I have been working for six years on a video history project, and obviously videos need more graphics than does a book, so I spend a lot of time tracking down historical pictures from many sources. I have several scanners, for special purposes, including an old 300 X 600 DPI (which now streaks colours above 300 DPI) Serial Port Mustek A3 EP scanner which will copy pictures as large as 11" X 17", in one piece! I have occasionally lugged this huge, awkward and heavy beast, along with a laptop computer, to libraries, particularly the Lloyd Reeds Map Collection at McMaster University, to copy old maps, in sections.



I recently saw a 2400 X 2400 DPI, 48-bit colour scanner for sale in Future Shop, which can operate as a conventional scanner for small pictures, but can also be separated from its base, and the working section can be laid on top of a large picture, or a map, and scanned directly. Both the top and bottom surfaces of this section are glass, so you can see exactly where you have positioned it in relation to the item you are copying, and this makes it easier to scan sections that can later be "stitched" together to form a larger picture. And the best part of this scanner, the Hewlett Packard Scanjet 4600 (there is also a 4670 which comes with an adapter for scanning 35 mm slides and negatives, which I didn't need) is that the "working face", which comes in contact with the material you are copying, is very smooth. This is much kinder to those precious old maps than laying the map on a scanner and then closing the lid, creasing the map at the "drop" between the scanner glass and the plastic surrounding it. (Actually, I never did that: I removed the lid, placed the map on the scanner glass, and placed books on top of the map, being careful not to crease the map, but it was difficult that way to always get the map straight, for stitching.) The operation of this scanner is best illustrated by a photo I saw, but can't find now, of a boy scanning the wallpaper, on the wall!

There's always a "however"! Before buying, I researched the reviews on the internet, and learned that many buyers were satisfied with the scanner, many were critical of some characteristic, and almost all complained about the software which runs this scanner. So I researched alternatives. You may remember the report I wrote just a year ago on SilverFast SE, the excellent program I use regularly to control my Microtek ScanMaker 4, and LaserSoft (the company which produces SilverFast) was the first place I looked. Nope, they support 220 scanners, but they don't have a version that supports this HP 4600 scanner, or many other HP scanners, for that matter!

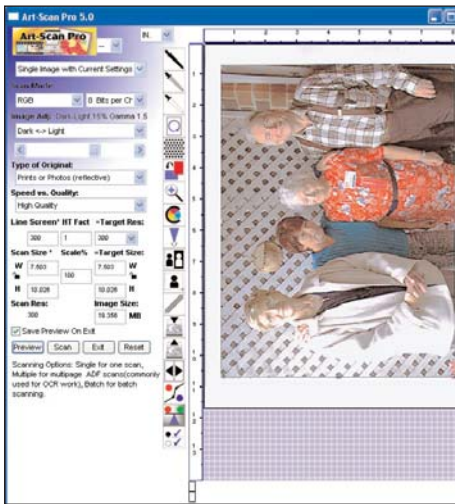
I checked VueScan by Hamrick Software. This software seems to be extremely capable, and they claim to support 350 scanners, but the program is more expensive than SilverFast (US\$60 for the Standard Edition and US\$80 for the Professional Edition), and you are required to purchase a separate copy of the program for each scanner with which you plan to use it. Same problem as SilverFast, but it cost even more, and with all the scanners I use, that gets very expensive! Anyway, it was a moot point for me, because the HP 4600 was NOT among the 350 scanners supported by the VueScan software. The reason given by Hamrick Software was that "the vendor [Hewlett Packard]



won't document the commands they use, and these commands are too complex to reverse-engineer!"

Enter the only other software that I

found and considered, Art-Scan 5.0, by Jetsoft Development. The list of Supported scanners listed HP JetScan 4100 and 5100, but not 4600. However, at the end of the long list they did support, there was a statement that if you went to the Scanner Manufacture's web site and downloaded the latest drivers, the scanner would work with another list of scanners, which did include the ScanJet 4600 (and 4670). While the cost was a little steep (US\$90 for a download - no CD), this one program would work with a great numbers of supported scanners, and it wouldn't be necessary to buy more than one copy for multiple scanners.



It seemed to have many features - Auto Scan mode, automatic or manual control over brightness, colour correction, select white point, black point, and midpoint, adjust the equalization, and the slope of the gamma curve, manual rotation for skewed pictures, descreening to prevent moiré patterns without reducing sharpness as most other programs do, sharpening and unsharp masking, Colour Sync/ICC Filter, a Vector Art Tracing utility, optimized printer output with CaliPrint, and several other facilities that I haven't yet had the time (or the need) to explore, and all of this happens after the Preview Scan, during the main scan, before it even goes to your photo editing software. There is even a batch scanning mode that "allows you to scan multiple images at different modes, (color, grayscale, or line art) and different resolutions - *all at one time!*" There are also some special facilities available for Mac users (I first heard of this program through a Mac user who has used it for several years). All this is available for your use through a program called

Jetsoft Viewing Booth Pro 2.0, which comes with it, or in your regular photo editing software - Adobe, Corel, Ulead, etc., -- with the TWAIN or WIA drivers your scanner uses. The program supports SCSI, Parallel, or USB connected scanners, too.

There was just one rub: I couldn't make it work! I worked on it incessantly for a few days, and I did get it to work with my Microtek ScanMaker 4 (SCSI), and my CanonScan N1220U (USB), both with a Pentium 3 running Windows XP, and the latter also with a Compaq Presario Laptop (Pentium ) running Windows 98, but every attempt to operate the HP scanner with Art-Scan quickly resulted in another crash! The scanner operated properly with the manufacturer's scanning software, but with Art-Scan it would make the Prescan alright, but hang up on the final scan, and the only way out was to use CTRL ALT DEL, and then reboot.

After having exhausting every possibility there was nothing left to do but contact the parent company of the faulty software. On review now it's quite clear that it's Jetsoft, but it wasn't as clear then, as there were several web sites selling the software (softwarestore.com, digitalriver.com, software-nirvana.com, etc.), but none seemed to claim authorship! The site with the most detailed information was scanhelp.com. That was where I had downloaded and bought it, and that's where I finally found an email address for support. Now I haven't had much luck in the past getting help by email, (I once got an obviously cuckoo response two or three months after I sent the email!) preferring to talk to service people by telephone, but I couldn't find a number, so I reluctantly emailed a description of the problem I was having.

I was overjoyed to get a reply in just an hour or two, from a company whose name I had hardly noticed before - Jetsoft. There were several emails back and forth, each with new suggestions of things I should check, changes I should make, etc., and I implemented everything I was asked to do, all to no avail. Finally I was asked to change a parameter for which I couldn't find anywhere to make the change. Somewhere along the line of emails back and forth they phoned me, (gave me their number, too), and walked me through some of the changes. This software was the last beta test of Version 5.0, and had just been released to the public. Jetsoft tech-

nicians were using an in-house developmental version with setup options absent on the release version, so together on the phone we went through some changes to the XP Registry. More tests. More failures. "Give us a few days", they said. They would then send me a "fixed" version, and I had to uninstall the previous version, install the new one, and repeat all the tests - three scanners and two computers every time. More emails, more tests, more crashes, more tinkered versions. Finally, after they fixed several bugs that they had found, they sent me the third new version to try, with a list of things to check. They wanted to make sure that it was still broken before they went out and bought an HP scanner for testing, so I spent a few hours on it, and provided answers to all their questions.

I didn't hear anything over the weekend, but when I called on the Monday I talked with a different technician who told me they were all working with a new HP ScanJet 4670 they had just bought! A couple of days later they sent me another new version, and this one worked just fine! At last. I congratulated the whole team and thanked them for their persistence.

That was on October 5th, 17 days after my first email to report the problem. And 17 days after that, on October 22, I received a friendly email from my contact, asking if I had experienced any other problems using Art-Scan with the HP scanner!

I have used email several times before to seek help with problems, and a few times I even got satisfaction, but I've never encountered service like this - several technicians and software engineers working for days, and even buying a piece of equipment for two or three hundred dollars, to reverse engineer a problem with a line of scanners that the other creators of third party scanning software had written off because "the vendor won't document the commands they use, and these commands are too complex to reverse-engineer"! Most companies would have cut their losses and refunded my \$90, and I would have been stuck with a scanner with an excellent design concept, but really clunky software.

Art-Scan and Jetsoft are on the S-C-C-A.ca LINKS Page, under Scanning. They are at a well-deserved position at the top of the list! Have a look! ■

Fred Briggs