Introduction

$\mathbf{1}$f marketing folks want to breathe new life into an existing technology, the method *du jour* is to tack "digital" onto the name. Today we have *digital* cable, *digital* cell phones, *digital* fuel injection, and now, *digital* video. But unlike some other technologies that have recently earned the *digital* prefix, digital video isn't just a minor improvement over the old way of doing things. Digital video is a revolution that is changing the way we think about and use moving pictures.

Regular folks have had the capability to record their own video for many years now. Affordable film movie cameras have been available since the 1950s, and video cameras that record directly onto videotape have been with us for over two decades. But after you recorded some video or film with one of these old cameras, you couldn't do much else with it. You could show your movies to friends and family in raw, unedited form, but there was no confusing your rough home movie with a professional Hollywood production.

Digital camcorders provide a slight quality improvement over older camcorders, but the real advantage of digital video is that you can now easily edit your video on a computer. I don't have to tell you how far computer technology has progressed over the last few years, and you know that modern Macs and PCs can now do some pretty amazing things. In a matter of seconds, you can import video from your digital camcorder into your computer, cut out the scenes you don't want, add some special effects, and then instantly send your movies to friends over the Internet — or burn them to a DVD. The capability to easily edit your own movies adds a whole new level of creativity that was — just five years ago — the exclusive realm of broadcast and movie professionals.

In a culture so accustomed to and influenced by video images, it's actually kind of surprising that personal moviemaking hasn't burgeoned sooner. Video is the art of our time, and now — at last — you have the power to use this art for your own expression. What will you draw on your digital-video canvas?

Why This Book?

Digital video is a big, highly technical subject, so you need a guide to help you understand and use this technology. But you don't need a big book that is so highly technical that it just gathers dust on your bookshelf. You need easy-to-follow step-by-step instructions for the most important tasks, and you need tips and tricks to make your movies more successful. You need *Digital Video For Dummies, Third Edition*.

Needless to say, you're no "dummy." If you were, you wouldn't be reading this book and trying to figure out how to use digital video. Thanks to digital video, high-quality moviemaking has never been easier or more affordable. I have included instructions on performing the most important video-editing tasks, including lots of graphics so you can better visualize what I'm talking about. You'll also find tips and other ideas in this book that you wouldn't find in the documentation that comes with your editing software.

Digital Video For Dummies doesn't just help you use software or understand a new technology. It's about the art of moviemaking, and how you can apply this exciting new technology to make movies of your very own. I have designed this book to serve as a primer to moviemaking in general. Sections of this book will help you choose a good camcorder, shoot better video, publish movies online, and speak the industry technobabble like a Hollywood pro.

Foolish Assumptions

I've made a few basic assumptions about you as I have written this book. First, I assume that you have an intermediate knowledge of how to use a computer. Movie editing is one of the more technically advanced things you can do with a computer, so I assume that if you're ready to edit video, you already know how to locate and move files around on hard drives, open and close programs, and perform other such tasks. I assume that you are using either a Macintosh or a PC. In writing this book, I used both Mac and Windows software, and this book will be of use to you no matter which platform you use.

Another basic assumption I made is that you are not an experienced, professional moviemaker or video editor. I explain the fundamentals of videography and editing in ways that help you immediately get to work on your movie projects. Most of this book is based on the assumption that you are producing movies for fun or as a hobby. I also assume that you're not yet ready to spend many hundreds of dollars on highly advanced editing programs. In this book, I show you how to make amazing movies using software that is already installed on your computer (or that you can purchase for a modest sum). I have elected to show how to perform editing tasks primarily using Apple iMovie and Pinnacle Studio. iMovie is free for all Mac users, and Studio is a powerful yet affordable video-editing program for Windows. A trial version of Pinnacle Studio is included on the CD-ROM that accompanies this book.

Even if you are working in a professional environment and have just been tasked with creating your first company training or kiosk video, this book will help you grasp the fundamentals of digital video. Not only will this help you get to work quickly and efficiently, but I also include information to help you make an educated decision when your company gives you a budget to buy fancier editing software.

Conventions Used in This Book

Digital Video For Dummies helps you get started with moviemaking quickly and efficiently. Much of this book shows you how to perform tasks on your computer, which means you will find that this book is a bit different from other kinds of texts you have read. The following are some unusual conventions that you will encounter in this book:

✔ Filenames or lines of computer code will look like THIS or this. This style of print usually indicates something you should type in exactly as you see it in the book.

✔ Internet addresses will look something like this: www.dummies.com. Notice that we've left the http:// part off the address because you never actually need to type it in your Web browser anymore.

✔ You will often be instructed to access commands from the menu bar of your video-editing program. The *menu bar* is that strip that lives along the top of the program window and usually includes menus like File, Edit, Window, and Help. If I'm telling you to access the Save command in the File menu, it will look like this: File ➪ Save.

✔ You'll be using your mouse a lot. Sometimes you'll be told to click something to select it. This means that you should click *once* on whatever it is you are supposed to click, using the *left* mouse button if you use Microsoft Windows. Other times you will be told to *double-click* something; again, you double-click with the *left* mouse button if you are using Windows.

How This Book Is Organized

Believe it or not, I did put some forethought into the organization of this book. I hope you find it logically arranged and easy to use. This book is divided into six major parts. The parts are described in the following sections.

Part I: Getting Ready for Digital Video

You may be wondering: just what is this whole digital video thing, anyway? Part I introduces you to digital video. I'll show you what digital video is and what you can do with it. I'll also show you how to get your computer ready to work with digital video, and I'll help you choose a camcorder and other important moviemaking gear.

Part II: Gathering Footage

Editing video on your computer is just one part of the digital video experience. Before you can do any editing, you need something to actually edit. Part II shows you how to shoot better video, and then I show you how to get that video into your computer — even if you don't yet have a digital camcorder, or you just have some footage on old VHS tapes that you want to use. I also help you record and import better audio because good audio is just as important as video when you're making movies.

Part III: Editing Your Movie

Until just a few years ago, video editing was something that required professional-grade equipment, which cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. But with digital video and a semi-modern computer, editing video is now easy and very affordable. In Part III of this book, I'll introduce you to the basics of editing. You'll find out how to arrange scenes in the order you like and trim out the unwanted parts. I show you how to add cool transitions between video clips, use titles (text that appears onscreen), and top off your creation with sound effects, musical soundtracks, still graphics, and special effects.

Part IV: Sharing Your Video

When you've poured your heart into a movie project, you'll definitely want to share it with others. This part helps you share your movies on the Internet or on videotape. You even find out how to make your own DVDs in this part.

Part V: The Part of Tens

I wouldn't be able to call this a *For Dummies* book without a "Part of Tens" (really, it's in my contract). Actually, the Part of Tens always serves an important purpose. In this book, it gives me a chance to show you ten cool tips and tricks for better moviemaking, as well as ten tools that will improve your movies and make your work easier. Because there are a lot of video-editing programs out there to choose from, I also provide a chapter that compares ten of them, feature by feature.

Part VI: Appendixes

The appendixes provide quick, handy references on several important subjects. First I show you how to use the CD-ROM that accompanies this book.

Next up is a glossary to help you decrypt the alphabet soup of video-editing terms and acronyms. Additional appendixes help you install and update the editing programs shown throughout this book.

Icons Used in This Book

Occasionally you'll find some icons in the margins of this book. The text next to these icons includes information and tips that deserve special attention, and some warn you of potential hazards and pitfalls you may encounter. Icons you'll find in this book include

Although every word of *Digital Video For Dummies* is important (of course!), I sometimes feel the need to emphasize certain points or remind you of something that was mentioned elsewhere in the book. I use the Remember icon to provide this occasional emphasis.

Tips are usually brief instructions or ideas that, although not always documented, can greatly improve your movies and make your life easier. Tips are among the most valuable tidbits in this book.

Heed warnings carefully. Some warn of things that will merely inconvenience you, whereas others tell you when a wrong move could cause expensive and painful damage to your equipment and/or person.

Computer books are often stuffed with yards of technobabble, and if it's sprinkled everywhere, it can make the whole book a drag and just plain difficult to read. As much as possible I have tried to pull some of the deeply technical stuff out into these icons. This way, the information is easy to find if you need it, and just as easy to skip if you already have a headache.

The CD-ROM that accompanies this book contains sample clips and still images that you can use to practice the techniques we discuss, as well as a trial version of Pinnacle Studio. This icon lets you know when you might need to access something from the CD. For a full run-down on everything that appears on the CD, see Appendix A.

Where to Go From Here

You are about to enter the mad world of moviemaking. Exciting, isn't it? Digital video is *the* hot topic in technology today, and you're at the forefront

of this multimedia revolution. If you're not sure whether your computer is ready for digital video, head on over to Chapter 2. If you still need to buy some gear or set up your movie studio, I suggest you visit Chapter 3. For tips on shooting better video with your new camcorder, spend some time in Chapter 4. Otherwise, you should jump right in and familiarize yourself with digital video, beginning with Chapter 1.