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Review: Scenalyzer Live 4.0

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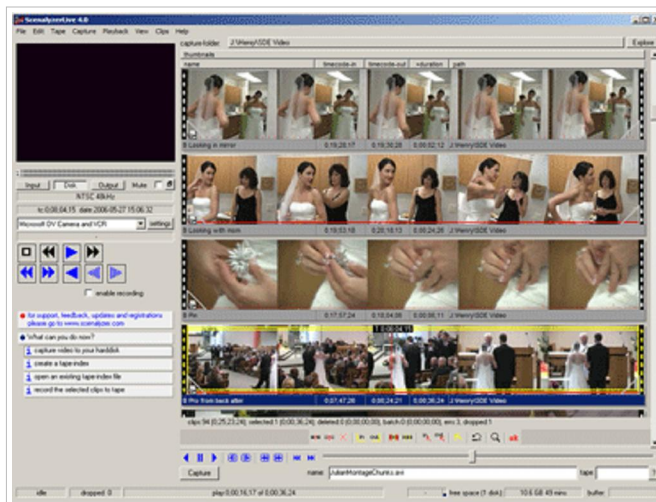
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Have you ever wanted to capture DV footage but found your NLE's capture utility too limited to do what you needed? If this has ever happened to you, check out [Scenalyzer Live](#). With Scenalyzer Live, developer Andreas Winter has created a small, inexpensive utility for DV capture that includes some convenient and useful features lacking in many NLE capture utilities.

A few years back, a new version of the NLE I was using appeared with modifications to how the program handled captured files. My workflow at the time was to capture everything as one big file and tediously scrub through each file, locating scene breaks and creating small files in the bin pointing to each of those pieces. The new release compounded the problem for me, so it was time to find a workaround or an alternate solution. Enter Scenalyzer Live.



Getting Started

Scenalyzer Live installs easily, either from a CD you can order on the company's website or from the downloadable version also available on the site. The program is all about streamlining your capture process, and accordingly it gets right down to business. When you open the application, Scenalyzer prompts you to choose the folder in which it will place your captured clips. Once you have assigned the capture folder, you are ready to upload your clips.

Some interface features you will notice upon startup are the VTR controls and preview on the left, and the thumbnails of each clip on the right. There is a capture button below the thumbnails. Press it and your camera starts rolling.

Capture and Catalog

After capture begins, Scenalyzer begins to separate itself from your standard capture utility. The program displays thumbnails as the clips are being captured so you can see what each clip contains.

There are scene-detection settings that allow you to use optical or timecode-based scene detection. Each time Scenalyzer detects a new scene, it displays a new set of thumbnails. If you click on the default filename of a clip, you can modify the clip name as it is uploading or even while another clip is uploading. Once you've modified the clip name in Scenalyzer, it will appear on your hard drive with the new name you gave it.



Most NLEs apply cryptic filenames to capture clips and use references to them in the scene bin for cataloging. You can always change the names later, but it's a laborious process. With Scenalyzer, you can name your actual AVI files based on the content of the clip as the video uploads and the thumbnails appear (Figure 1, left). **The thumbnails help show you the content so you can accurately name them. The fact that**



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you can name clips on the fly even as other clips are uploading is a feature that can make the cataloging/capturing process much more efficient.

Another neat trick Scenalyzer can do is automatically number clips with the same name. For instance, we will frequently have a handful of clips of something like setup shots or dress details for a typical wedding production. Just name them all "dress details," and when you commit the files to disk, it will number each clip "dress detail0001," "dress details0002," etc.

For weddings, we may have a tape that contains prep footage, ceremony footage, and reception footage. Obviously, in the editing process we would catalog the clips into separate folders in the bin of our NLE. Most NLE capture utilities will have a single video folder for all your clips. With Scenalyzer, you can move clips around to different folders right within the application. Just highlight all your clips for a particular section like "prep" and press the P key. Scenalyzer will prompt you for a new folder. Upon entering a new folder name, Scenalyzer will move all your highlighted clips to the new folder. Cataloging just got easier and for me, importing into the bin became more organized when I started using Scenalyzer.

My company does a number of three-camera Same-Day Edits (SDEs) each year, but we haven't reached the point where we're ready to invest in hard disk recorders yet. DV capture remains a real-time process in Scenalyzer, of course, but the cataloging features are critical for getting clips organized and ready to edit, and the fact that we can do so with such a handy and visual interface as we capture is a tremendous time-saver, and makes the SDE process much smoother.

Once all your files are renamed as you like them, and saved to the proper directory, just click on the "OK" button below the thumbnails and your changes will be written to disk. Your video drive will now have each clip with custom names saved to custom directories.



Other Features

The features I've described up to this point—thumbnail generation, the ability to rename and organize files as you capture—are the main reason Scenalyzer Live is such a vital part of my postproduction workflow. But this \$39 application has a number of other great capabilities that are worth mentioning here.

One feature editors may find useful is the tape index feature. This function enables Scenalyzer Live to fast-forward through your tape and make an index of all the scenes with starting and ending timecodes. This index can then be used to create a quick batch capture list, which may come in handy for a videographer doing a Same-Day Edit without the aid of an assistant. The videographer could create the index in a few

minutes, select only the shots needed from the tape index based on a shotlist and timecodes from the shoot, and then start capture with the batch capture function. Get it started and go get your setup shots of tables, the cake, and the like while Scenalyzer Live is doing the capture on your laptop. When you get done with your setup shots, you can come back and your wedding footage will be waiting for you to start cataloging and editing.

The tape index function will make a list of files with low-resolution thumbnails showing what is in each clip. Figure 2 (left) shows a sample tape index. On the bottom of the clip-list window is the same toolbar that is displayed below the capture thumbnail window, allowing you to modify the clips with cuts, in/out points, and such. You can now use this index to create your batch capture list by simply pressing the "Insert" key on the scenes you want to capture. A checkmark is placed on those scenes as they are marked for batch capture (note the checkmarks in Figure 2). Select "Start Batch" from the menu and the capture process starts.

Scenalyzer's Batch Capture utility also tops many of those found in popular NLEs by doing a few things better. First, it doesn't stop and start your camera or playback deck over and over. It advances to a section just prior to the capture point, goes into play mode, and starts the capture when the timecode comes up. If you have two clips next to each other that need to be captured, Scenalyzer just captures them sequentially without stopping and starting the camera. This creates less wear on your playback deck and camera than many batch capture utilities. If you have some blank spots on the tape with no timecode because of removing and inserting tapes, it will play through those spots and capture just as it is supposed to without getting confused.

Scenalyzer's many additional functions can be activated and configured via the "Options" menu.



There are numerous ways that users can tweak Scenalyzer's operation to suit their workflow, but there are two found under "Capture Settings" (accessible through both the "Capture Settings" and "All Settings" tabs), as shown in Figure 3 (left), that may be of particular interest to event videographers.

The first is Time Lapse capturing. When you check the "Yes" box adjacent to the time lapse feature in either of the "Settings" tabs, you are given the ability to specify a time factor for capture. For example, a factor of 60 takes a one-hour tape and captures a frame every 60 frames.

When capture is completed, Scenalyzer will create a one-minute time-lapse file.

Another useful feature is Auto-Capture from Live Camera. Select this option when your camera is plugged into the FireWire port of your computer. Every time you press the Record button, Scenalyzer starts recording.



If you are doing a Same-Day Edit at an event and one of your cameras is tripod-mounted, you can plug the camera into your laptop and use Scenalyzer just like a Direct-To-Edit hard disk device.

Have you ever captured some clips and found a few long clips with only a little usable footage in them? If you don't want to worry about scrubbing through all the footage to find the one good portion, you can use Scenalyzer's Clip Edit toolbar on the bottom of the thumbnail window as shown in Figure 4 (below).



With these options you can split clips, merge clips, and set in points and out points, much as you would in your NLE. When you press "OK" to commit the changes to disk, all your clips will be recreated based on your changes and written to the hard disk. One word of warning, though: if you split and merge or set in/out points, Scenalyzer will create brand new AVI files, which takes a little more time than simply changing file names and paths.

Philip Hinkle (www.frogmanproductions.com) is an award-winning videographer based in the Madison, Wisconsin area. Co-founder and president of the Wisconsin Digital Media Group (www.wdmgwi.com), he is a featured speaker at the [4EVER Group's Video 07 conference](#).

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