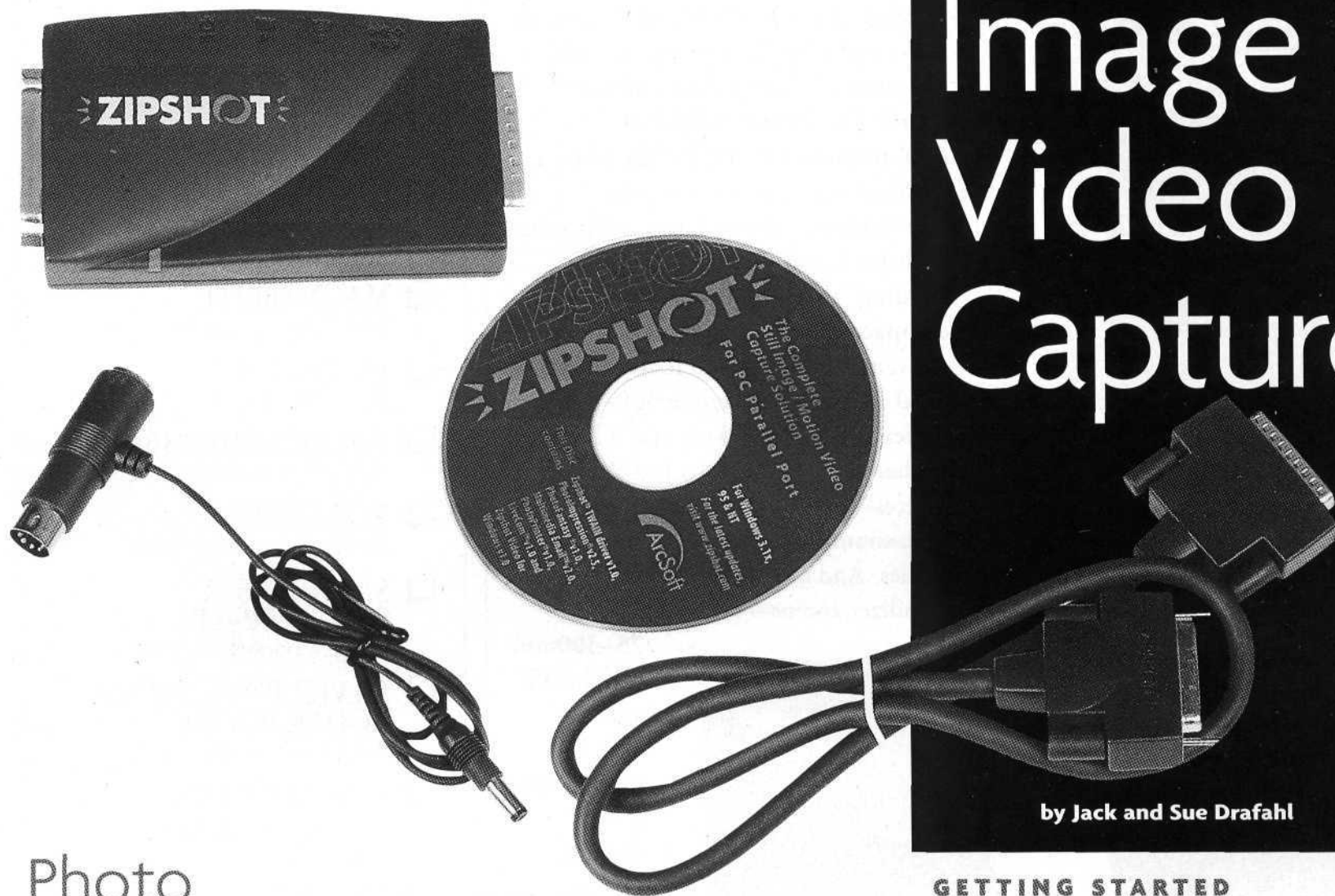# ZIPSHOT: Still Image Video Capture

by Jack and Sue Drafahl

Photo communication
is undergoing a dramatic metamorphosis. The traditional photo silver process is still very strong and viable, while the emerging technology is the digital camera. The video image is a transformation of the older 8mm and 16mm movie cameras and even it is evolving from an analog capture system to full digital video.

As each area evolves, we start to see more and more photographic bridges between them. We recently discovered an electronic bridge that connects traditional photography, digital still photography and video—the Zipshot by ArcSoft. When this device is attached to your computer, you can import images from both digital and video camera sources directly into your computer. From there you can edit and output to your favorite printer or send them over the Net.

One of the biggest problems facing ArcSoft was creating a bridge that would work with most personal computers in use today. Their solution was the Zipshot, an external device that's the size of a 3x5-inch print and less than an inch thick. The unit is not only small, it is easy to install and use!

GETTING STARTED

First, disconnect your printer cable from your computer and plug in the new ArcSoft printer cable. Attach the Zipshot to the other end of this cable, and then plug your original printer cable into the other end of the Zipshot. Next, disconnect the keyboard cable from the back of the computer and replace it with the new keyboard pigtail cable supplied with the Zipshot. Your standard keyboard cable then plugs back into the other end of this new cable.

A small power line splits off from the pigtail and supplies power to the Zipshot. It is very important that this pigtail is used to power the Zipshot; other DC power systems will damage the Zipshot.

With some older computer systems you may need to change your printer configuration, but all the details are well-covered in the instruction manual.

The Zipshot has one RCA input, one RCA output, and one S-video input port on the side. The RCA input is for digital cameras, TV signals, VCR, DVD, video cameras, and any other type of video input device that uses an RCA jack. The S-video port uses the cable supplied with your video camera. The RCA output enables you to connect to your TV so you can preview a larger image.

SUPPLIED SOFTWARE

The supplied CD comes packed with the main Zipshot program and several neat supporting programs. Load the CD into your computer, run the setup program and you can start bringing images into your computer. The PhotoImpression editing software can import images from the Zipshot, digital cameras, data CDs, hard disks, Zip drives, and any other type of storage device. You can then edit and store the images in a photo album, to be printed to electronic paper at any time.

When you select the Zipshot from the PhotoImpression software, a special screen pops up in the middle of the edit screen. A main viewing screen is on the left, and a secondary control panel is on the right. Four selections are possible on the main viewing panel. The top button is used for setting up the configuration on the main screen. You can select screen size, black-and-white or color, control brightness and contrast, and select the type of video source coming into your Zipshot.

MANUAL SETTINGS

If you want to deviate from the Zipshot's default settings, you can use the manual button to set resolution from 320 lines to 1600 lines, select a still image or moving image, and select how may images you want to capture in a sequence.

The elapse button lets you set the Zipshot for recording images at a pre-determined time and intervals for up to 24 hours. A maximum of 10 images per minute can be captured with the Zipshot using the continuous capture method.

The video button is used to set video input specifications and tell your computer where you want files saved. The saved images appear in the album as AVI files. If you double click on one of the AVI icons, a media previewer will appear and preview the AVI file like a movie.

Once you have your Zipshot on line with an input signal, you can review the images in real time on your computer screen. When you want to capture an image, simply press the capture button and it will save a single image or a series of images to your hard disk. Single images can be saved as BMP, Tiff, JPEG,

TGA, or PCX files and sequential images are saved as AVI files. The single files can then be edited in PhotoImpression software and loaded into several of the other programs included with your Zipshot. The AVI files can be played with an AVI viewer or imbedded into a word processing document, presentation file, or even sent as an e-mail attachment.

PRINTING OPTIONS

One of the best programs on the ArcSoft CD is PhotoPrinter. This small yet effective program allows you to select from a variety of printing formats. Images can be loaded from your hard disk, data CD, digital camera, scanner, or directly from the Zipshot. If you don't plan on editing and want to print directly from capture to paper, this is the program to use. This program can print a full image, or split it into a variety of multi-size formats. With one of the templates, for example, you can print one 5x7-inch image and several wallet-size photos, while another prints 3½x5-inch prints intermixed with smaller images.

If you want to send your captured Zipshot images to your friends via e-mail, you can use the ArcSoft Multimedia Email program. This program lets you select fancy backgrounds, and add sound and captured still images as well as AVI files created with the Zipshot. Once you've created your special e-mail, you can use the preview function to see how it will look at the other end. The only drawback is that the files are larger than normal and take longer to send, so a 33 or 56Kbps modem would help.

Testing the Zipshot was a lot of fun. The possibilities for capture, editing, and output were endless. The PhotoImpression program worked extremely well. Many of our video tapes that had sentimental images were now available to us as single images or sequential files on our computer. This is a great photographic tool and definitely deserves a place in your computer system. Cross that digital bridge with the Zipshot and experience a whole new world of imagery.

The Zipshot has an estimated street price of $129. For more information contact ArcSoft, Inc., 4015 Clipper Court, Fremont, CA 94538; 800/762-8657. On the Internet at www.arcsoft.com . ∎
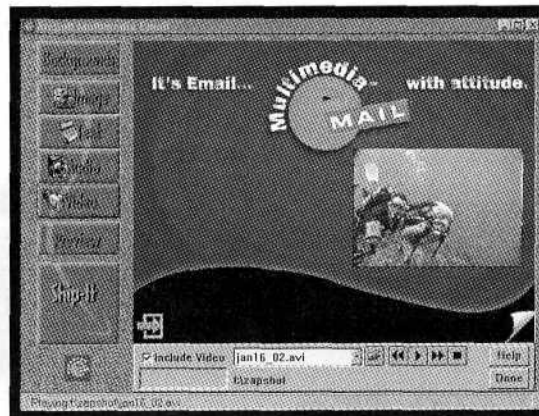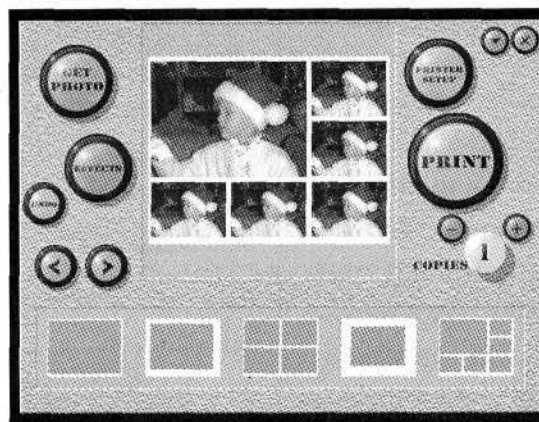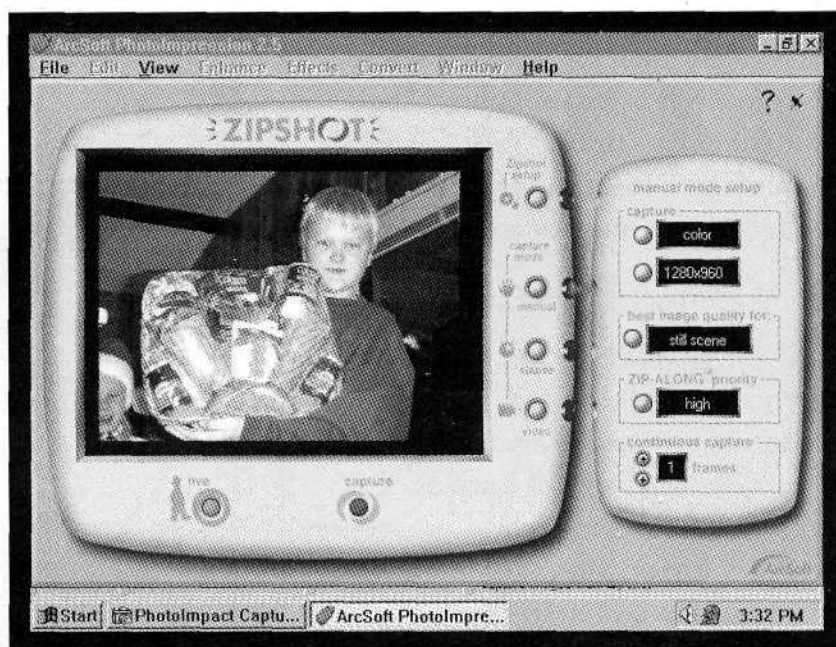
The ArcSoft Zipshot is a small, easy-to-use video capture device that enables you to import images from digital and video sources directly into your computer. It's bundled with PhotoImpression software for editing and storing images for printing at a later date. There's also a multimedia program included that makes it 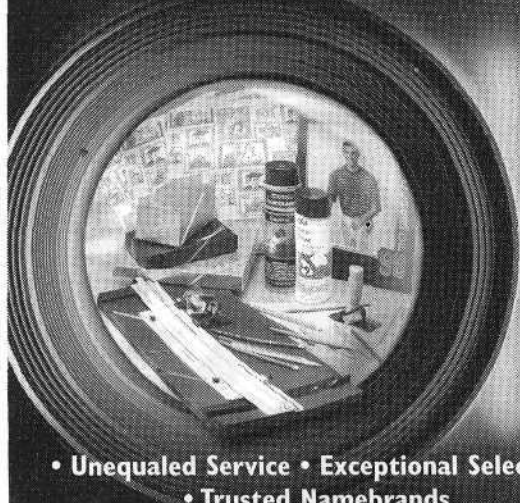easy to send captured images to friends via e-mail.