

Saving Your Past Memories...Converting VHS to DVD

Remember the birth of your first child? His or her first birthday? Their first steps? Her ballet recital? His football game? The great times you had at holidays and on those vacations?

What about the great times you had with your parents, grandparents or great grandparents?

Aren't you glad you captured all of those special, precious moments on videotape? You've got dozens of taped memories stacked in a cabinet or tucked away on a shelf in closet.

These family videos are probably the only reason you still hang onto your VCR.

Disappearing Past

The problem is consumer VHS tape isn't be best format to use for long-term storage.

Every time you play one of those tapes, you wear away part of the image, you scratch the video, you destroy small portions of the memories. If you haven't played those family celebration tapes for years you may even be in for a rude awakening. The magnetic film may have aged and the images have disappeared. The coating may mysteriously peel away or flake off when the tape is played.

The memory images are suddenly...simply memories.

Signs of video quality degradation can become apparent after five years and even sooner if the tapes aren't stored properly.

Before those precious videotaped moments disappear, transfer them to DVD. The new low-cost DVD burners and low-cost, easy-to-use hardware/software products like ADS Tech's InstantDVD Xpress make the task of transferring your footage to DVD and saving them for generations to come a snap.

When the job is done, you have videos that:

- won't deteriorate no matter how much you play the disc because the laser never touches the media
- will play on almost every DVD player, recorder or drive, especially if it has been purchased in the past two years
- will last over 100 years
- you can copy again and again and each copy will be as clean and crisp as the original
- lets you add menus so you can quickly move from video clip to video clip
- take up almost no space on your shelf or in your drawer

Basic System

Almost every computer sold today is "video-ready."

But to do the job properly, the system should have a Pentium III 800Mhz or AMD Athlon processor, a minimum of 256MB of RAM, USB 2.0 port and at least 10GB of hard disc

space for video capture. For best results we'd recommend at least a Pentium 4, 1GB of RAM and two high capacity (40GB) hard drives. You can capture your analog video with the USB 1.1 port but the video quality will suffer.

Depending upon how you want to store and replay your digital video, you'll also need a CD or DVD Burner. Because DVD burners and media are so economical, you'll probably want to save your video project to broadcast-quality DVD.

For your video capture, the Instant DVD product family includes an external video capture device (breakout box) that can be plugged into your computer's USB port without opening the case and adding cards and connecting cables. The ADS Tech breakout box also contains a very high performance hardware codec (encoder/decoder) that does all of the hard work of converting your analog videotape content to today's digital format.

If you simply want to preserve the existing VHS content, you can use your computer to copy your video direct from tape to DVD. If you'd like to improve your videos, you can copy the content to your hard drive and use editing/authoring software to add chapters, transitions, special effects and music.

While it is true that Windows XP comes with a program called Windows MovieMaker, it only covers the basics. The software included with Instant DVD is much easier to use, lets you produce a better quality video and makes the entire procedure a fun project rather than a grueling job.

ADS Tech offers a complete family of DVD video production solutions, but let's focus on the extremely fast, low-cost and simple solution for turning videotape movies into quality, long-lasting DVD movies -- DVD Xpress.

In addition to the breakout box, DVD Xpress includes a unique program called CaptureWiz that combines screen shots of the hardware connections and corresponding software choices to make the entire process quick, easy...almost foolproof. In no time at all, you can capture your taped video and burn your movies onto DVD.

If you want to do more than straight archiving, DVD Xpress includes video editing and authoring software that allows you to get very creative. DVD Xpress incorporates the latest in video conversion and filtering technology to reduce noise on your old VHS tapes. It also includes unique "Audio-Lock" technology to provide perfect lip synch throughout the capture, edit and disc burning process.

Direct-to-Disc

To make an exact copy of your tape to DVD without any edits, simply use the direct-to-disc feature. In this mode, the software automatically captures the video, converts the file to DVD format and burns it to disc.

If you have a large number of VHS tapes you want to convert to DVD, this can be a tremendous time-saver.

If you don't mind giving up some creative control, the software will also automatically add DVD menus and chapter points by detecting scene changes. While there are a number of variables, it takes between 10-20 minutes to capture, encode and burn a 5-minute

video clip to DVD so you can see you'll have plenty of time for dinner or reading the paper during the process.

But when the process is complete, you will have rescued your family video from certain loss and will have a disc you can play forever, again and again without damaging the quality. You can also make copies for other members of the family and they can enjoy reliving the events in the same high quality.

Editing Your Video

While all of the action, scenes and events were undoubtedly gems at the time you shot the video; viewing the work later probably makes you question your good taste.

Once you've captured your taped video to the computer, you can edit it to remove embarrassing segments, unsteady camera action, dull periods or material which is simply better off forgotten. Here is where the DVD Xpress editing software will help you turn a migraine-producing home video into a family treasure.

Switch to the story board mode by clicking on the appropriate icon. Now you are ready to edit the movie by dragging video from the index area onto the storyboard. This is your opportunity to mix and combine video clips from multiple files to tell a better, more complete and more exciting story. Simply move the segments around and arrange them so they will play back in the proper order.

During the process, you'll also want to add those special transitions, voice over, music, titles and unique effects that can almost magically turn a mundane home video into a great family movie.

One of the most common mistakes people make in their production of personal and family videos is overdoing the creative process.

When you first scroll through the editing software your creative heart will probably leap with joy. The editing software includes tons of fancy transitions, snazzy filters and eye-popping special effects. Just because they are there doesn't mean that if you don't use them all you're not getting your money's worth.

The minimalistic approach is not only more effective but it will also enable you to finish your production faster.

Authoring Your Movie

Once you are satisfied with your video editing and final movie, you're ready to export it (write the final creative work to disc). The exact exporting method will depend on whether you're making a video CD or DVD.

Your video can be written to disc in two format standards -- MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group)-1 or MPEG-2. MPEG-1 is commonly used for video CDs (VCD) storing data at 1150kbps. This is 30 frames per second (fps) or similar to the quality of your VHS tape storage. An 800MB capacity CD will hold about one hour of MPEG-1 quality video. SVCD (super video CD) provides medium quality video storing and playing your video at 2400kbps providing about 30 minutes of video capacity. DVD quality is high quality MPEG-2 video that stores data at 6000kbps and plays back in near theater

quality at 60 fps. A 4.7GB capacity DVD (+ or -R) will hold up to two hours of video memories and highlights.

The lower quality settings will allow you to store more video on a disc but the viewing quality suffers. Use the eyeball test (watch the video yourself) and you'll quickly see the difference. Because we are so conditioned by high quality movies and television, it is best to stick with the highest quality family movie possible.

Use the video production software and click on the MPEG button to select the settings you want or use the presets.

The software's wizard will quickly guide you through the complete creation process. Arrange the video segments in the order you will want them to play back, set up your menu and click the correct icon to burn or write your movie to disc.

Conclusion

Depending on the speed of your DVD burner and the length of your movie memories, the process can be completed in 15 minutes to an hour. Remove the disc from the burner, pop it into your set-top DVD player, grab some popcorn and relive your memories now and for years to come.

If you aren't completely happy with the movie, want to add or delete video clips or change the sequence and transitions, simply go back to the editing software and make the necessary changes.

If you like the finished movie and want to send a copy to friends and family, copy the finished work of art back to your computer's hard drive and make a second, third or more copies. Put the copies into protective jewel cases and send them to others so they can enjoy the finished movie.

Regardless of your age...you'll find the videotape memories you saved to DVD are worth their weight in gold.

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