Grand 1394

PCI - 1394 Host Adaptor

With the recent explosion of sales of DV camcorders Firewire cards have moved into the mainstream market.

Now the market has split into two types of FireWire capture devices those with hardware compression chips and those that compress with software routines. The only difference between the two is that the hardware based ones can render the final video files in close to real-time while the software-based ones take more time to render the edited footage for output. Software-based compression kits ranges from the $159 of the Pyro DV to about $1,000. Hardware-based units can climb as high as $2000 - $5000.

VC Ratings

Kit Includes

- 1394 PCI 3 port host card
- 1394 to DV Editing Cable
- Ulead VideoStudio Editing Package
- User manual
- Full PCI Support
- Windows 2000
- Windows 98 SE
- Windows Me

GrandTec Grand 1394 [PCI to 1394 host adapter]

Performance	8
Documentation	6
Installation & Setup	9
Value for money	8
Built-in Help	6
Out Of Box Experience	8

RRP: $144

For more information contact
Nuclus Computer Services
(03) 9569 1388

The Package

Included in the Grand 1394 package you will find Ulead VideoStudio install CD, an IEEE1394 PCI interface card, a FireWire interface cable and the manual.

The manual isn't the most beautifully designed ever seen, but it does a good job of explaining the install procedure step-by-step, with good illustrations. The card itself has 3 x IEEE1394 ports. The chipset powering the card is created by Texas Instruments, and is the same one that powers a number of other DV capture cards in the industry. The card is very solid, and not at all flimsy like some low end PCI devices. The card does not get overly warm during use, so heat shouldn't be a concern.

Installation

The card is standard-sized PCI and snapped easily and quickly into a free PCI slot. Upon re-booting the system the computer's BIOS correctly identified a new mass storage controller and when Windows Me finished loading it proclaimed a new device had been found and prompted for the Me disk, and the drivers were quickly and efficiently installed.

The application CD has an autoboot function and quickly installed the VideoStudio editing application and the required DV drivers. After the drivers were installed, the Sony camcorder used for this test was connected with the supplied FireWire cable and was instantly listed in the device manager.

Although VideoStudio is a competent and stable piece of software, it doesn't have the number of options that some other programs like Vegas Video, Video Factory, Media Studio, Premiere or even Studio 7 possess. Such packages tend to provide the power to control every little option, right down to the most minuscule cut.

VideoStudio does possess a large number of ready-made transition effects, more than enough for the majority of video producers out there.

Since Video Studio uses the same Smart Render technology used by its big brother Media Studio, render times are par for the course for a software-based DV encoder.

This card captures video without dropped frames and controls the video camera directly from computer. Its rendering speeds are the same as any other software-compression-codec FireWire cards on the market - which means it is not a speed demon while rendering, but it will more than suffice for your average DV video producer.

Conclusions

This is a good device (and great value for your money), and seems to follow the performance specs of the IEEE1394 interface to a 'T'. As a video editing device, it allows lossless editing at a great price.

Since the PYRO DV card can also act as a high speed controller for FireWire devices, users are investing in the future with this card, as well as getting quick and easy DV non-linear video editing capabilities.

If starting out as a video producer with a shiny new DV camcorder, then by all means get yourself a Grand 1394, and start creating high quality videos with minimum hassle.