



CAPTURE EXTERNAL

1. INTRODUCTION

There are plenty of manufacturers out there offering you different devices from which you can transfer your old videotapes onto your computer. Some are expensive, some are less expensive. But you don't really need this! Giving the nature of your video camera, along with some cables, you can sort this out on your own. In this tutorial VE will tell you how to accomplish exactly that.

2. PREPARATIONS

You are dependent on using your video camera for this, so you need to check that your camera has a firewire connection from which the signals will be transferred onto your computer/Mac (almost every camera has this today). Secondly, you need cables enabling you to receive signals from the external source – which can be virtually anything. The editor's camera is a Sony DCR-PC9E, which does the trick with no problems. Check out the camera's user manual for further information.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

In Fig. 1 the arrow points to the firewire connection. In Fig 2 the arrow points to the A/V connection, from which you can receive external signals. The camera functions in other words as a relay station that simply transports the signals from an external source onto your computer. Hardware available does the same in principal, but might have more settings. But this is very easy, and the quality is superb and saves you a lot of time as well as money.

Another option is to connect your camera to the external source and copy the signals onto a DV-tape, which again can be copied onto the computer. But this takes more time, and if your source has running time exceeding 60 minutes you'll find yourself in a world of shit. You miss precious takes, you have to swap tapes, and of course repeat everything with your next transfer operation.

In Fig. 3 is the cable that came with the editor's camera. This cable has the normal red/white/yellow connections along with the connection, which goes into the camera as shown in Fig. 2. Fig. 4 is a different set of cables; on older cameras this might be an option – if you lack the pure A/V connection.



You can obtain almost any kind of cable today. Check out what you need and how your camera is equipped before buying. Any kind of converter is also possible to buy, if your camera doesn't have the necessary plugs.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

3. HOW TO COPY

But you are not set quite yet. You can of course connect the red/white/yellow cables to your TV, VCR, DVD or whatever, but a better solution is to make use of the SCART option (SCART is very common indeed and found of most TV or VCR equipment). This requires a SCART plug which you can direct the signals. The one that came with the editor's camera failed, so the editor had to buy a better one.

Costing approximately 30€ it has been an investment that has paid off. Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 show you the plug with its A/V and Super VHS and SCART connections. Note the button on top (red arrow), which allows you to set the direction of the signals (in/out).



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Now that you have made all the connections you are ready to start your transfer. Keep in mind that the camera should not be running batteries, but steady power to avoid stops. Also you need to prepare your computer.



Depending on which software you use, set the folder in which to store the take, apply settings (avi gives you the best quality in VE's experience and can be used with virtually any software) and check that you receive the signals. You should be able to see exactly the same on your monitor window on the computer as on the camera.

4. COPYING

When everything is set, press the play button on the device that you are capturing from and start the recording on your computer. One hour of tape or recording with best quality is approximately 12GB on the computer.

Also remember the copyright legislation and do not copy films and DVDs that are protected. But with your old tapes you are of course free to make the transfer. You can of course also copy DVDs that not are protected.

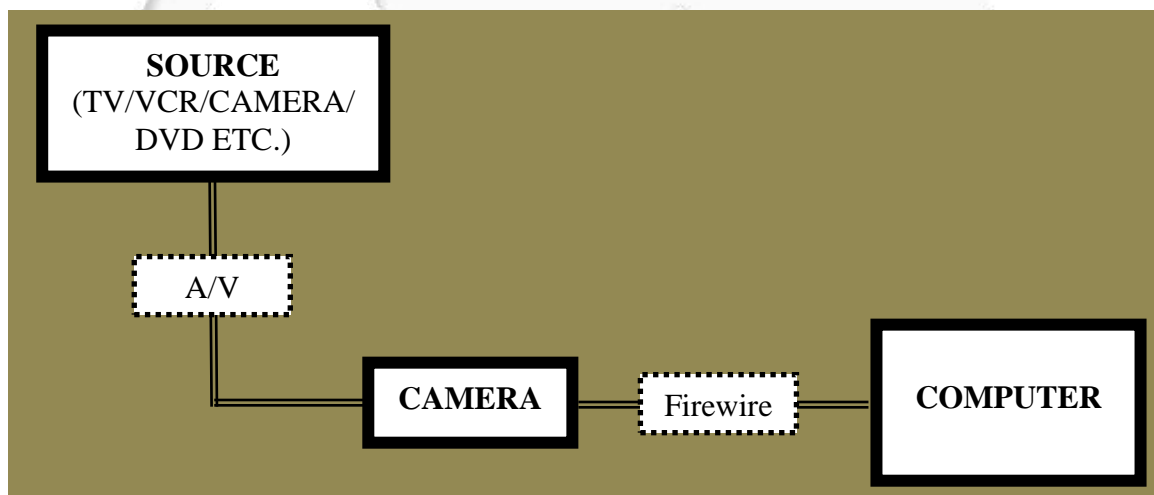


Fig. 7

5. CONCLUSION

After you have transferred your films or footage, you can make use of these in your new projects – or simply make a backup from VHS to DVD for instance. The editor finds this very useful and allows you to make use of all material you have available without having to buy expensive hardware. But this requires tough that you can play your footage/films preferably from a source that can be connected with SCART. If you can't - it's a different ballgame and different tutorial. ■■