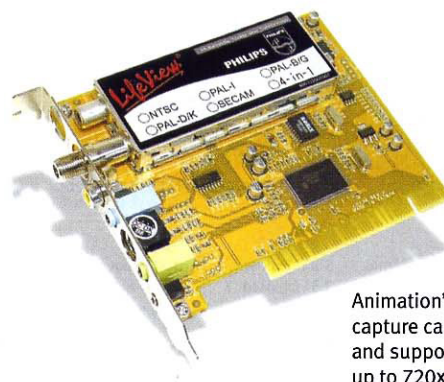


New functions spice up outdated basic models

Manufacturers are bundling customized software and integrating TV and radio tuners, MPEG-4 and security features.



Animation's FlyVideo 3000 video-capture card uses a Philips TV tuner and supports capture resolutions of up to 720x576 pixels.

Video-capture cards used to dominate the computer video editing sector, but the arrival of products with similar capabilities built into them, such as digital video camcorders, digital still cameras and PC cameras, has shrunk the market of suppliers. In Taiwan, many video-capture card suppliers have diversified into related products such as graphics cards and cameras. Most have maintained video-capture products as a sideline business though there are four companies that still specialize in them.

Taiwan makers offer PCI video-capture cards and video-capture USB adapters. Topping the line are models that integrate TV tuners, FM radio, or support for A/V compression technologies. Support for MPEG-1 playback is standard in basic cards and adapters. Makers are also offering value-added models that support MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 formats, which enable DVD-quality video applications. Most cards offer audio recording in MP3 or WMA formats.

Security and video surveillance is a niche application targeted by some suppliers. One maker has released a Web-based capture card that accepts simultaneous input from up to four surveillance cameras.

Since most video-capture card makers use the same chips, product features and performance are also similar. To differentiate their video-capture cards, suppliers work with software developers and bundle their products with applications. These programs range from video-capture enhancers to video-editing software. Manufacturers often meet buyer requests for customized video-capture card designs, customized software or technical support.

Makers focus on adding value

As in the case with other mature product lines, makers' profits from standard video-capture cards have been shrinking. In

trying to bring life back to the line, makers have decided to integrate value-added features into their basic models.

Leadtek Research Inc. offers two video-capture cards that have built-in TV tuners, MPEG-X compression decoding, and support DVD-resolution video at 720x480 pixels. The first product, the Winfast TV2000XP Deluxe, uses Conexant's Bt878 chip for analog broadcast signal capture.

Leadtek's other product, the Winfast TV2000XP Expert, uses Conexant's CX2388X chip for 10-bit video decoding. It contains an integrated TV tuner, FM radio and saves broadcasts to the PC's hard drive. It also transfers A/V files from the PC to VCRs, camcorders, and LD, VCD or DVD players. The card supports MPEG-1, MPEG-2, MPEG-4, MP3 and WMA files.

Prolink Microsystems Corp.'s video-capture cards range from low-end models with standard video capture to high-end offerings that support MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 compression.

Some manufacturers have developed video-capture cards for security applications. O'Rite Technology Co. Ltd has a video-capture card designed for computer-controlled surveillance systems. The WebNetEyes Surveillance CA801's RCA jacks accept input from up to four video cameras. The CA801 uses Conexant's Bt878 video chips and transmits up to 10fps per channel. This card's TCP/IP-compatible software has motion-detection capability, real-time and prescheduled video recording, and transmits images over the Internet.

V Center Technologies Co. Ltd also plans to release video-capture cards for security and surveillance systems in 2004.

Some companies also offer external video-capture adapters

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