

The difference in zoom

Understanding the uses of optical and digital zoom functions

By **WAYNE R. PALMER**
 For the Sun-Gazette

One of the features often touted on a digital camera is the range of views the camera can capture, called the zoom range. This range can vary from wide angle, which is like stepping back to get more in the picture to telephoto, which is the equivalent of moving closer to the subject. The zoom means the camera can frame the image at any point in between the two ends. This allows for more versatile photography, and it is certainly easier and perhaps more pragmatic to push a button to bring your subject closer as opposed to physically moving closer.

It wasn't that long ago that fixed or single focal length lenses were considered optically superior to zoom lenses. However, over time that argument has lost ground and now with computer assisted design, the optics in lenses are much better.

This has all translated to cameras with better optics. And with the sensor in most digital cameras being smaller in area than that of film, lenses are smaller allowing more optical power at a lower cost.

The zoom range of some point and shoot cameras can make Digital Single Lens Reflex (D-

SLR) photographers jealous. A point and shoot camera that can fit in your pocket can have the zoom range that used to only be obtainable with the use of several lenses for a D-SLR.

In addition to the optical zoom range of a camera, a new feature called digital zoom, is included in many digital point and shoots, which can cause confusion. This feature, borrowed from video cameras, allows the camera to bring the subject closer, far beyond what the optical zoom can do. Ratings of 12X are not uncommon. But before you think you will be able to fill the viewfinder with a crystal clear image of the cardinal in your bird feeder or a close-up of the a batters face taken from the outfield, keep this mind: the digital zoom features only crops and resizes the image taken at the maximum optical range. The digital zoom feature does not increase the quality of the picture and does not pick up any detail that can't be captured with the optical zoom range of the lens. Initially this may seem like a great feature, but you may quickly notice that the picture quality rapidly declines as you increase the power of the zoom. In fact, at the highest power, the picture may not be very satisfac-



tory. Only experimentation will tell.

So what is the point of digital zoom? Well, it offers the option to crop a picture in camera without having to use a computer. Perhaps if you are not proficient in using editing software you might find this feature useful. Most photographers who use editing software would probably be better served to leave the digital zoom turned off and use the computer to crop their pictures.

One final note, remember the higher the power of lens, the more steady you must hold the camera. Even with image stabilization features that can counteract camera movement, the only best way to ensure sharp images with a long telephoto lens is to use a tripod.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

When your optical zoom, top, doesn't get your subject close enough, you might try using the digital zoom, below, which crops and resizes the image. Often the picture is not very sharp and the effect can be duplicated in an image editing program.

What you need to know about aspect ratio

Aspect ratio is something the average photographer may not give much thought to until it is time to get an enlargement of that favorite image and the enlargement does show the same amount of information as the original. Aspect ratio is the comparison of the width to the height of an image like the common photo size 5 by 7.

Over the years the public has been conditioned to think in terms of 4 by 6, 5 by 7 and 8 by 10, common photo sizes offered by photo labs. There is a common misperception that these common photo sizes are progressive changes in size, but the aspect ratio of each size is different which can create differently cropped images.

The 8 by 10-sized print often highlights this situation. If you double the one dimension, than you would also double the other dimension. A 4 by 6 would translate to an 8 by 12. If you were to order or print an 8 by 10 from your 4 by 6 aspect ratio image, either two inches would be cropped off the image or you would have an odd-sized print placed on an 8 by 10 sheet of paper with either result requiring custom framing.

What might be the final print size is something to keep in mind when taking a picture. If you are taking a group picture that you know will be printed as an 8 by 10, don't fill the frame with the group leaving space on each side to allow for cropping.

Another game fails to reach expectations

BY **ADAM WILSON**
 Sun Gazette Staff

So far this year I haven't been highly impressed by the video games hitting the shelves. Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer almost accomplished it. Though I was not overly impressed, I will say this, it was better than Spider-Man 3 the Game.

FF: ROTSS is slightly based off the movie Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer, which stumped me since it's supposed to be a game based off of a movie. The game has its own original plot featuring classic villains such as The Super Skrull, Terrax, Red Ghost and the infamous Dr. Doom.

The graphics are pretty good, not mind-blowing like others I've seen, but pretty good none the less. As for an opening movie... What opening movie? You see the Fantastic Four walk into a cave and begin talking about strange weather anomalies, yet we don't see it. Sue Storm, a.k.a. The Invisible Woman, talks about her wedding, a pointless conversation, one best suited for the movie, not the game.

Each character has their own special abilities and objective in the missions. Somehow, Reed Richards, a.k.a. Mr. Fantastic got the power to control electricity like Dr. Doom in the first Fantastic Four movie. If you come across a bridge that needs to be activated, Mr. Fantastic creates a prong with his arms and zaps the switch making the bridge activate. Wouldn't it be easier to just hit the button?

At multiple points in the game you'll come across a wall, door, or barricade that calls for "Clobbering Time" and Ben Grimm a.k.a. the Thing will knock it down. If something needs lit of fire, well that's where Johnny Storm, a.k.a. The Human Torch will come in handy.

Last but not least, Sue Storm, though as useless as she is in the video game has a point. She can create an orb of energy and send it through small cracks to blow things up once it gets in range.

The game is pretty much your average, run-of-the-mill button-masher. If you're playing the PS2 version, X will be your new best friend in the game. X does all your basic moves.

By smashing items, green or blue energy balls will emerge. Green energy balls are health, while the blue are cosmic energy balls. Cosmic energy balls give your characters the energy they need to pull off their fantastic feats.

The game really has no plot to it, besides the Fantastic Four going around kicking super villain butt like the Super Skrulls and Terrax. You keep hearing about these weather anomalies, but yet — you never see them. You see about maybe four cut scenes.

Though the actors from the movie did not supply the voices of the game characters, the game voice actors did a terrific job of mimicking actors such as Ioan Gruffudd and Jessica Alba.

I'm still pondering exactly why the creators called the game Fantastic Four Rise of the Silver Surfer because up until the last level you don't see the Silver Surfer. I mean, you'd think he'd have a BIG-



ADAM WILSON

Bits & BYTES



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The new game based on the movie, **Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer**, a scene of which is shown above, suffers from some non-sequiturs and is too short, according to a Sun-Gazette review by Adam Wilson.

GER part since his name is in the title.

The game itself was entirely too short. Why do game makers insist on making games so short? Its no fun when you beat a game in two days. What happened to the days of Grand Theft Auto Vice City, or Final Fantasy VII when it took you months to beat a game, instead of days.

One of the things that annoyed me from the movie was the game. Galactus the giant Plant Eating Robot was a giant floating nebula in the movie, and in the game, you don't even see him. I know the game is the Fantastic Four, but I think it would have been pretty cool if you could've kicked some Galactus butt as the Silver Surfer.

SPOILERS: The final battle with Dr. Doom is pretty lame. He gets more super powers from the Surfer's board, and at one point joins with the board, which did not happen in the movie. Once Dr. Doom is Super Doom, with the power of the board, the game gets exciting, for like 15 seconds. Then, the game ends. It just ends. Where, as mentioned above is Galactus? Make the game harder, longer, better! Let us fight Galactus as the Silver Surfer!

Sadly enough, as semi-entertaining as Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer was, it only receives 3.5 stars out of a possible 5. Lets hope when Transformers: The Game comes out that'll blow me and other gamers like myself away.

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