



DIMAcast 376

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## Battle At F-Stop Ridge Peter Jeune, The Camera Store, Calgary, Alberta [www.TheCameraStore.com](http://www.TheCameraStore.com)

**Bill McCurry:** Just over a million people live in Calgary, Alberta, but the Camera Store from Calgary seems to be known worldwide, because of the great video, Battle at F-Stop Ridge. Peter Jeune, good morning.



Chris Niccolls, (left) is the on air talent, Peter Jeune is a co-owner of The Camera Store and Jordan Drake is behind the camera and handles the post production functions.



meaningful for you. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awq90APEVgw>

Join the 2-1/2 million people who invested a minute and two seconds to view “Battle At F-Stop Ridge” - It will help this DIMAcast be more

**Peter Jeune:** Good morning.

**Bill McCurry:** What started the Battle at F-Stop Ridge?

**Peter Jeune:** Well, Chris and Jordan decided that we wanted to try to do the camera reviews, so they did a review and we shot it in the store of the Panasonic GF1 that was the first one we did. And then once new products started coming out, they would try to do a video of the reviews and their quality improved, they got better at shooting it, got better at lighting it and we got better gear as well.

The Battle at F-Stop Ridge, they came up with the idea, but they didn't tell anyone. We just noticed the whispering's and muttering's going around the store and they were being very secretive. And Julian, one of my partner's said "what are you guys up to" and they said "don't worry, you'll like it". And so we just let them do it, you know meanwhile they're recording 20 or 30 different cameras for the shutter sounds and that sort of thing and then I think they showed it to Julian before they put it online and then when they put it online it just went crazy.

**Bill McCurry:** Okay now the first question a lot of bosses would ask is "how could you have employees going around whispering, doing things you don't know what they're doing"?

**Peter Jeune:** That's what they do.

**Bill McCurry:** No that's what you do. How do you have faith in knowing that these people are going to be doing the right thing?

**Peter Jeune:** They've been with us a long time, Chris has been with us over 10 years and Jordan now is 6 or 7 I think. So we trust them.

**Bill McCurry:** How did Chris and Jordan become the producers?

**Peter Jeune:** Well, Jordan just loves everything about film-making. He wouldn't want to work in the business, but he knows it very well. He's a real perfectionist and I think they talked about doing that and Chris turned out to be a natural presenter, he's very good.

**Bill McCurry:** So the two of them just partnered up...

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** ... and from the employer perspective you're saying, "Go for it!"?

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** Now how did that, from your perspective as a boss who is paying these people to do something, how did you measure their productivity?

**Peter Jeune:** Well they shoot the videos on their days off, so they work in the store the rest of the time, so we pay them a few hundred dollars per video and they do up to four a month.

**Peter Jeune:** So it takes a whole lot of their time.

**Bill McCurry:** Oh yeah.

**Peter Jeune:** Particularly Jordan, it's one thing to shoot it, but Jordan does all the editing.

**Bill McCurry:** He does all the post-production?

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** Wow, because these are totally well put together.

**Peter Jeune:** Yep, yeah he's - he's very good at it.

**Bill McCurry:** You did a parody, your X10 Review; you kind of spoofed the DigitalRev people?

**Peter Jeune:** Yes.

**Note: Peter and Bill mis-spoke – the correct model was Fuji X10, not the HS20 as stated. The transcript has been corrected to show Fuji X10**

**Bill McCurry:** And they didn't find that funny?



**Chris reviews the Fuji X10. Hard to imagine Canadians could insult anyone ... Chris and Jordan apparently aggravated the ‘competition’ at [www.DigitalRev.com](http://www.DigitalRev.com) who censored any mention of this video. Chris commented that maybe all videos should be**

**shot with tripods. DigitalRev never commented, but they instantly started shooting everything with some form of camera stabilization. That was a great improvement for their viewers. Check out the parody at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjUuDcn0DSQ>**

**Peter Jeune:** No, every time someone posted it on their blog they removed it.

**Bill McCurry:** No kidding. Censorship even?

**Peter Jeune:** Yep, yeah they were not happy, we thought they'd find it amusing, because we talked about how successful they are and how popular they are, but no they were not happy with it.

**Bill McCurry:** But what did they change as a result of your video?

**Peter xxx:** well because of the comments that Chris made at the end of it, they changed the style of shooting, they started using a tripod more often, they slowed the shutter speed down so it didn't appear as jerky, so it did improve what they did.

**Bill McCurry:** The Camera Store Channel on YouTube has a 111 videos, you're top hit Battle at F-Stop Ridge 2 ½ million views and you've got a lot of them in the six figures.

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** Why are people watching yours instead of somebody else's?

**Peter Jeune:** Well based upon the comments we get, they're informative, they don't take themselves seriously, they're entertaining, but not so far off it's not a good thing and we're honest, you know if we don't like something, like the Canon EOSM video, we say so. We say we don't like it, so we don't really beat people up, we'll just say we don't like it for this reason.

**Bill McCurry:** Well you have a humor channel within your channel and one of those is the Mirrorless Party.

**Peter Jeune:** Yes that - the Mirrorless Party was part of the Canon EOS-M Review, yeah so, so we predated because Canon waited two or three years before they brought that camera out and they did a very poor job of it and we believe they did that intentionally.

**Peter Jeune:** We think they're so busy trying to convince their consumers and their dealers that mirrorless is not the way to go, we think, I mean there's no other explanation for it because you know they can make good products and that wasn't at all in any way a good camera, so it's really nice until you picked it up.

**Bill McCurry:** Well that video was priceless, every camera retailer in the country loved the whole way you personified all of the various cameras.

**Peter Jeune:** Yeah, it was fun.

**Bill McCurry:** But again that's something that Chris and Jordan did on their own?

**Peter Jeune:** Yeah and actually that - that is the first time they'd ever shot stop motion animation, so they never even tried it before,



The Mirrorless Party should be required of all camera resellers. The staff of The Camera Store did an unbelievable job capturing the perception of the major brands. One minute 43 seconds of laughs for industry insiders.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO7rxitFLZg>

never practiced it before, they just shot it and then the rest of some of the other staff did the voices.

**Bill McCurry:** Who made up the script?

**Peter Jeune:** Chris and Jordan. They do all of that.

I'm telling them to get to work all the time because they're talking about the next thing they're shooting.

**Bill McCurry:** Did they have a customer following in the store?

**Peter Jeune:** Oh yes. Chris is our top sales person.

**Bill McCurry:** Do you think that's because of the videos?

**Peter Jeune:** some of it is because of the videos, but I mean the videos are being really about three years now, so Chris has been with us over 10.

**Bill McCurry:** That says a lot.

**Bill McCurry:** You probably have some observations as to why Battle at F-Stop Ridge got 2 ½ million hits, yet the sequel, which was very good, got only 170,000 and the making, the one that showed how you put it together, only got 23,000.

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** I mean that's a huge fall off, what did we learn from that?

**Peter Jeune:** what we learned from it is I think the first one was just so different than anything that was out there, it was very clever; it was one minute long, one

minute, one second long, so it kept the attention span. The second one we were a bit surprised, it took a lot longer to shoot.



The sequel took more than twice as long as the original to shoot. It was shot in the snow in balmy minus 22 degrees Celsius weather. The 1 minute 8 second video generated less than 10% of the audience of the original. Check it out at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PovspE6IVg>

**Bill McCurry:** Because it was in the snow.

**Peter Jeune:** And it was minus 22 Celsius that day

**Bill McCurry:** Whoa.

**Peter Jeune:** We were shooting that. It was cold.

**Bill McCurry:** Yes.

**Peter Jeune:** And but people thought that the quality of first one was better, even though it was shot much more quickly, we shot it in I think three hours, the sequel was eight. but it tells us that we don't really know why something will work very



well, that X10 at half a million views continues to surprise us people continue to watch it. We did one called the World Photo Games. Just before the London Olympics and we shot it - it was shot in the style of a Visa commercial, that was the look and feel that Jordan wanted to go with and we thought that would go crazy and it didn't and it's got 150,000 or something like that.

**Bill McCurry:** Well most people would be thrilled with 150,000 views...

**Peter Jeune:** I know.

**Bill McCurry:** ... on YouTube.

**Peter Jeune:** I've been told that.

**Bill McCurry:** No offense.

**Peter Jeune:** When it came out I

went 50,000 views that's terrible.

Yes people were saying you know

how difficult that is to get on a

YouTube video, without kittens?

**Bill McCurry:** Okay and again the genius for this came from Chris and Jordan?

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** If I'm listening to this and I want to really make a splash on

YouTube, what are the things you mentioned length, you believe a minute is right?



What makes one video go viral and another be “disappointing”? It’s hard to tell. The creativity and cinemagraphic techniques in this one minute 15 seconds video are superb.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxQweCUGMeY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxQweCUGMeY)

**Peter Jeune:** for that sort of thing that was about right, yep because it's short enough that people will watch and they'll share it with friends. You know many of ours are 12, 13, 14 minutes.

**Bill McCurry:** Yes.

**Peter Jeune:** And while that X10 gets a lot of views, but if it's something that people are going to share and watch over again, I think short is better.

**Bill McCurry:** Now the X10 I thought was 60% humor, maybe 40% content?

**Peter Jeune:** Yeah I mean Dave's good at reacting to Chris.

**Bill McCurry:** how important is the humor?

**Peter Jeune:** Very, that's just people will watch it if they're entertained and they're getting good information at the same time. Otherwise it's too dry.

**Bill McCurry:** It has to be info-tainment.

**Peter Jeune:** Yes, essentially.

**Bill McCurry:** Well thinking of one like the X10 with a half a million hits, would it work to make that into part one and part two or just let 'er rip for the whole thing and people tune out when they want?

**Peter Jeune:** I think for something like that it works to do it in one, I mean when the D800 and the Canon 5D Mark III came out I think, we did three separate videos, comparing those cameras and other cameras and those also had a lot of views, if



it's a product that really appeals to people, they're going to watch it. The X10, I think just the humor that in order you know carry a lens around the saying that was three feet long and ...

**Bill McCurry:** Well you clearly showed to people who weren't familiar with it what the differences were.

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** Audio is important to you.

**Peter Jeune:** It's the biggest challenge we have.



**Bill McCurry:** Tell me how you overcome the audio challenge?

**Peter Jeune:** We changed gear quite a bit with audio, sometimes we use light clips, but if possible and it depends how many people are on a shoot if there's someone available to help, then we'll use you know a mike with a pole and a dead cat. We get better quality that way. But audio is technically very difficult. We don't have a lot of training on it. We're working on that. We know a lot of people in the movie business, so they're going to help us with that.

**Bill McCurry:** So here you are King of F-Stop Ridge, if you will, and you're saying in essence you don't know what you're doing yet?

**Peter Jeune:** not on every aspect. Audio, it's Jordan's skills, he really never had any training with audio, so you know we're learning as we go, and for the most part

it's pretty good, but if we have comments about quality, generally it's audio.

Occasionally it's something dumb like wrong color space setting or something like that, but usually if we get any negative - if we get critiques it's about the audio.

And we get plenty of critiques.

**Bill McCurry:** Tell me about that, how do you deal with that?

**Peter Jeune:** If they made a mistake, they always say, “You’re right. You know we did that.” But they respond to questions and comments and they're pretty keen to do that.

**Bill McCurry:** Have you found your online sales go up as a result of this international exposure?

**Peter Jeune:** we don't do international online sales, yet so that's difficult to say. We hope to start doing that soon. So I don't know yet, but I hope so.

**Bill McCurry:** But across Canada you're shipping into other Provinces?

**Peter Jeune:** Yeah.

**Bill McCurry:** Because of your notoriety from the videos?

**Peter Jeune:** I think that helps, I think that helps. Everyone looks at our Website, all of our competitors do.



**Bill McCurry:** you kind of poked fun in your spoof thing about not using tripods, how important do you really think tripods are when you're shooting video?

**Peter Jeune:** We never shoot without a tripod or monopod.

**Bill McCurry:** Period, end of report.

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** Is that a policy or is that just what these guys figured out?

**Peter Jeune:** Because Jordan won't do it; he's very picky; he just likes everything to be perfect.

**Bill McCurry:** How important is the high/high quality video to get viewership?

**Peter Jeune:** I think you're taken more seriously if it's very good quality. it doesn't look like you're you know making stuff in your basement. So technically I think it always helps if it looks really good and some of them like that world photo games, I mean that looked spectacular.

**Bill McCurry:** It really did.

**Peter Jeune:** But they're constrained by time, they're constrained by light, if it's a winter day we don't have a lot of light and often the light is really ugly. So we have a few that they're just ugly, ugly looking videos because of that.



**Bill McCurry:** I had noticed it, but I hadn't understood why.

**Peter Jeune:** they're shooting primarily with a Sony FS700, and they're shooting something called S-log and it looks completely flat when they shoot. It's like shooting raw, but you're able to do a lot more with the entity using that, so.

**Bill McCurry:** So does that bring it out?

**Peter Jeune:** It's improving the look, yeah and if you have ugly light it helps.

**Bill McCurry:** As you're doing more and more videos, the latest ones at the end say shot on Manfrotto Tripods.

**Peter Jeune:** Yeah we've had few people ask us if we want gear, so we'll take them up on that.

**Bill McCurry:** All the gear is from the store, but it's - you don't manufacture any of that gear, it's the same gear that's available...

**Peter Jeune:** Yes.

**Bill McCurry:** ... stores around the world, why did the camera store put this gear to use and nobody else has done anything like this?

**Peter Jeune:** I don't know. We have the people that want to do it and I guess that's the big thing. They like doing the product reviews, they do such a good job of it, they want to do it.

**Bill McCurry:** Where did you learn - where did you get your business acumen? You understand the business,

**Peter Jeune:** I think I learned it by working for people who didn't get it.

**Bill McCurry:** Okay.

**Peter Jeune:** The reason we're different than just about anyone in this industry, is - and actually this is an explanation I gave to the staff the other day. We like photography, we take pictures, we like pictures, we buy pictures, we buy photo books, so we get to work in this industry and be able to help other people get better at taking pictures and we get to make a living doing it. Unlike most of our competitors, the business is all about the box that leaves the building and ours is we help our customer, the boxes will leave. So that's the way we approach everything there's lots of things we don't do well, it's just our competitors are terrible at it. It's great for us, because we make plenty of mistakes. If we make a mistake, we say you're right we made a mistake, but how can we fix this? So that's the way we approach it just how would we want to be treated in this situation? And how do we help our customers get the best result? And everyone I've worked for doesn't do that.

**Bill McCurry:** What do you think makes The Camera Store successful?

**Peter Jeune:** I guess our customers are very loyal and they keep coming back and they send their friends, so that - I mean that's it, I've been dealing with people 28 years when I



worked for other people and they come to the Camera Store and they won't go anywhere else.

**Bill McCurry:** So you worked for another store in Calgary?

**Peter Jeune:** Yeah I worked for a few.

**Bill McCurry:** And what provoked Peter to go out on his own?

**Peter Jeune:** I kept getting fired, I ran out of places to work.

**Bill McCurry:** Seriously?

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** You were fired?

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** Some of your bosses have to be sitting there kicking themselves for firing you.

**Peter Jeune:** They're all out of business now.

**Bill McCurry:** Well doesn't that say something.

**Peter Jeune:** Yeah I think so.

**Bill McCurry:** How many employees at the Camera Store?

**Peter Jeune:** Thirty-three.

**Bill McCurry:** Do you measure your sales people's productivity?

**Peter Jeune:** yeah we look at it over time.

**Bill McCurry:** Are they paid on commission that they base?



**Peter Jeune:** They're paid a little bit of commission. what we've discovered was we kept hiring people, but I was still as busy when I was selling as I ever was, so we're hiring people and making it easier for the ones that were there, so we never wanted to go to a commission model, but we had too, just sort of as some incentive to do more.

**Bill McCurry:** But it's not so much that it distorts the relationship is that ...

**Peter Jeune:** No we won't let it.

**Bill McCurry:** You have some long-term employees.

**Peter Jeune:** Yep.

**Bill McCurry:** Yet you claim you're demanding on your people.

**Peter Jeune:** Very.

**Bill McCurry:** But if you're demanding on your people, aren't they leaving?

**Peter Jeune:** Sometimes.

**Bill McCurry:** Are they the good ones that leave?

**Peter Jeune:** not for that reason, no. Generally the good ones are moving on to their own business or something like that; we've never lost an employee to a competitor.

**Bill McCurry:** And yet you're demanding?



**Peter Jeune:** Very.

**Bill McCurry:** Is there a correlation there, the more you demand the more they stay?

**Peter Jeune:** Perhaps, yeah.

**Bill McCurry:** Or is it that by being demanding to use the expression you have eagles and eagles like to soar with other eagles.

**Peter Jeune:** I think there's some of that as well, yeah.

**Bill McCurry:** What's number one on your list to do better for 2014?

**Peter Jeune:** It's always customer service. I mean there's lots of other things in the business you can do better, you can make better buying decisions, you can manage your inventory better, but it's always customer service, keeping customers happy, making sure they come back, making sure they tell their friends.

And it's really simple. I don't know why people don't get it.

**Bill McCurry:** The concept is simple, but isn't the execution pretty hard?

**Peter Jeune:** I don't think so, I think it's easy. You just treat people the way you'd like to be treated. And if there's a problem, fix it and if you made a mistake say you're right, I mean at times I've had people yelling at me and if we've screwed up and you say you're right, what can we do to fix this and it completely deflates any anger they have.

**Bill McCurry:** So 17 years running your own store after working for a couple of others that didn't make it, what advice would you give to a store owner today?

**Peter Jeune:** Well we have found that people will pay the same for good service, so you always have to be very competitive. You won't survive unless you keep your customers and you certainly won't survive unless you can sell volume.

**Bill McCurry:** People pay the same for good service. Are you saying that you have to be the lowest price on every item, every time?

**Peter Jeune:** No but you have to be certainly on the major items. You have to be very competitive.

**Bill McCurry:** Okay. Peter June, thank you for your leadership.

**Peter Jeune:** You're welcome, thanks for having me on.

We value hearing your ideas, suggestions or comments . . .

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