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EXPO SURPRISES

The Plot Thickens

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SAN FRANCISCO -- It's always the same. You hang around the Expo floor a little while and you start finding things. One surprise after another.

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The first surprise was bumping into Lucky, who newsletter subscribers may recall once interned for us. "How's it going, Lucky?" we punched him in the shoulder.

"Yeah, fine," he mumbled, dazed by the crowd until he half turned and recognized us. "Mikel! Hey, hi!"
He was bummed out about the new Macs. He only saved \$52.13, he explained, since the last Expo. The rate of innovation was putting everything further and further out of reach. "I gotta get a job like you guys where they just send me stuff."

"So what are you using, Lucky?"
He still had the Dell laptop he got at an auction five years ago. "Actually, I'm more comfortable with Windows than the Mac," he confided. In the din of the Expo floor, no one could hear him but us.

"How's that?" we pretended not to hear.
"I'm more comfortable with Windows, I said," he hollered, causing a few heads to turn.

"Why?"
"I guess I never told you guys but I got another job interning for this iPod outfit. They make carrying cases. They used to make leather gloves, but who buys gloves anymore? One day somebody came in with an iPod and they started making iPod covers," he said.

"The trouble was they put me on a Mac. I didn't last long. I guess I don't have to tell you." He sighed. "When you're running Windows, nobody really expects anything to get done. But if you don't have Windows, you don't have an excuse."

We patted him on the back. "Lucky, all you need is Virtual PC."

OVERHEARD

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We shook hands and wished Lucky, well, luck. Then we wandered around the Adobe booth to the Lightroom kiosk. "Is that going to be the final name?" someone asked. "Well, never say never, but I don't think we're going to change it again." Not terribly illuminating, we thought, so we wandered along the Aperture wall at the Apple booth listening to the Q&A.



Lightroom Illuminated

We found Kent Oberheu's presentation particularly interesting. He explained that Aperture doesn't store the versions it creates. It builds them on the fly from the original image and the edits it stores in its SQLite database. That saves a lot of space.
In the case of a layered Photoshop file, he said, a reference to the Photoshop file is saved in the database, but not the layered file. Just a thumbnail. The database stores thumbnails of everything, apparently. On export, it will only include the IPTC metadata, he noted, not everything.

"Think of it as a Finder for photos," he said. And indeed, that makes a lot of sense.

COLOREDGE

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We stumbled across a tiny booth with some brilliant monitors on display. The Eizo ColorEdge (<http://www.eizo.com>) is a series of three monitors supplied with Eizo's ColorNavigator calibration software, which uses a 10-bit look-up table to calibrate brightness (stabilized on start-up, wake-up or ambient light by a built-in sensor using a drift correction function), color temperature (from 4,000 to 10,000 Kelvin in 100 K increments) and gamma (which is adjusted at the factory to 2.2). The software works with several brands of hardware calibrators.



ColorEdge Monitors

The CG220 can display the Adobe RGB color space, a wider gamut than the sRGB color space that limits most monitors (like the CG210 and CG19 models). Both the CG220 and CG210 use an Eizo ASIC with 14-bit color processing for smooth grayscale rendering comparable to a high-end CRT. We did see a nice gradation from deep black to white, and noticed subtle shadow details during the demo. Very nice. The monitors are backed by a five-year warranty, too.

COLORVISION

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Calibration is one of those things that separates the clones from the creatives. So we wandered over to the ColorVision booth (<http://www.colorvision.com>) to see what's new. Quite a bit since we last raved about its Spyder.

Neil Bradshaw took us through the lineup. Designed for the home user, the \$99 Spyder2express is a simple and affordable version of the Spyder2, which itself does a bit better on LCD calibration than the older Spyder (although CRT calibration is not much improved). The \$179 Spyder2, designed for the enthusiast/prosumer/designer, can calibrate both CRTs and LCDs but makes the transition a little quicker. And the \$279 Spyder2Pro, designed for the pro shop, handles dual monitors and calibrates multiple monitors to a single standard.

The software behind these devices has been nicely rewritten with extensive help available at any step in the process, very welcome in this technically challenging process. The Spyder2express sets gamma at 2.2 and doesn't let you change the color temperature or provide RGB control calibration, but the Spyder2 does. More samples are read than in the previous version of the software to create a more accurate profile.

Colorvision also had its \$599 PrintFix Pro, a Datacolor 1005 spectroradiometer to with ColorVision software to printer profiles that support all RGB-driven inkjet, dye-sub, thermal, chemical and laser printers. Very exciting stuff.





PrintFix Pro

You first define the variables used in the process you want to profile, including the printer, ink and paper type. Then you run a Print Quality Check to assure the printer is printing the targets and images properly. Next you print your preferred target and calibrate the Datacolor 1005. The next step is the longest, reading each color patch with the 1005 before storing the profile and running a test print. But it's that easy. You can even edit ICC profiles with the software, to tweak them for your system.

SCRAPBOOKING

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We saw an interesting Scrapbook application for the Mac from Intriguing Development (<http://www.macscrapbook.com>). The \$49.95 iRemember is a simple page layout program that comes with a wealth of templates and clipart (much of which is in the scalable PDF format).

What we particularly liked about it was the MacPaint-like simplicity coupled with the very nicely implemented object inspector. Click on photo frame or text frame and the inspector shows you all your options. There's really nothing to learn.

Images, for example, can simply be dragged from your iPhoto library into a photo frame. iRemember will size the photo to fit but the inspector provides a slider to resize the image. You can rotate the image or the object, add a drop shadow and layer it over another object.

The new version 1.5 supports an opacity control and export to JPEG for Web display of your scrapbook pages.