



# Competition is a great thing for pros

For photographic manufacturers,  
rivalry breeds innovation

**M**aybe it's because this is an Olympics year. Or maybe it's because it's an election year. Whatever it is, the spirit of competition was running strong at this year's *Professional Photographer Hot<sup>1</sup> Awards*. With over 200 total entries in more than 40 categories, the 2004 Hot<sup>1</sup> Awards were the biggest and most contested in the awards' six-year history.

The only problem was picking the winners. With so many great products up for consideration, our judges had their hands full selecting the most noteworthy products from a long list of remarkable contestants. There were so many super products that in several categories, the winner squeezed by with the narrowest of margins.

But that sort of tough competition among manufacturers is a good thing for photographers. The tighter the race, the harder the runners work to win it. These companies are out there drumming up as much innovation as they can muster to outdo one another, and the people who benefit are the consumers, who have better, faster and smarter options than ever before.

Chosen by our exclusive panel of pro photographer judges, this year's Hot<sup>1</sup> Award winners represent a great set of tools for the professional image-maker. Only you can ultimately decide what fits your particular needs the best, but if you're looking for some great suggestions, this is the place to start.

—Jeff Kent, Hot<sup>1</sup> Editor



# FILM CAPTURE



## 35mm SLR

### ① **Konica Minolta Maxxum 70**

Capturing this year's award for 35mm SLR is the Konica Minolta Maxxum 70. In recent years, 35mm SLRs have been increasingly eclipsed by their digital counterparts. Fortunately for film fans, the technology poured into the digital market has a way of trickling down to the less expensive film-based cameras, making them a highly affordable option with a host of high-tech features. Case in point, the Maxxum 70, a \$300 camera with the kind of features that cost thousands just a few years ago. The Maxxum 70 scored for its bevy of auto-focus aides, including the Multi-dimensional Predictive Focus Control for moving subjects, Direct Manual Focus for fine-tuning, and Wide Center-Cross 9-Point auto focusing sensor that covers horizontal, vertical and diagonal aspects in all four quadrants of the frame. Built for shooters on the go, the Maxxum 70 has a continuous advance speed of 3 frames per second (fps) and as sophisticated an exposure metering system as you'd find in a much more expensive camera.

**MSRP: \$300. [www.konicaminolta.us](http://www.konicaminolta.us)**



## Color Negative Film

### ② **Kodak Professional Portra 800**

For the second straight year, a Kodak Portra film wins this category. For 2004, it's the 800-speed Portra color negative film, with its fine grain for smooth enlargements and wide range of under-exposure latitude. Kodak bills this film as the ideal solution for low-light situations and capturing objects in motion. Try it on late-day weddings or sporting events. Typical of all Kodak Portra films, this one yields true, consistent skin tones and excellent detail.

**MSRP: Price varies by retailer. [www.kodak.com](http://www.kodak.com)**



## Black-and-White Film

### ③ **Kodak Professional BW400CN**

It's a clean sweep for Kodak in the film categories, with a victory for BW400CN, a black-and-white, chromogenic film designed for processing in color negative chemistry. Unlike most black-and-white films, black-and-white prints made from BW400CN can be printed on color negative paper. The idea is to simplify black-and-white print making by making it possible to develop the film in any lab using Process C-41. The versatile film has a fine grain, strong highlight and shadow detail, and a smooth, neutral tone scale.

**MSRP: Price varies by retailer. [www.kodak.com](http://www.kodak.com)**



# DIGITAL CAPTURE

## Professional Digital SLR Under \$3,000

### 1 Nikon D70

This category typically includes a selection of cameras whose price and features are appealing to a broad range of customers, from serious amateurs to seasoned pros. The Nikon D70 is no exception. It has the exposure control, white balance and flash operation systems that you'd find on a higher-end DSLR, yet this baby's ready to shoot as soon as you turn it on, making it a good model for an entrée into digital photography. For a camera in this class, the D70 is super quick.

There is virtually no shutter lag, and thanks to the D70's fast dynamic buffer, it can take less than one second to focus, shoot, transfer, and display the image.

The buffer simultaneously writes the image to the CompactFlash card as it displays it on the vivid LCD screen, which allows you to continue shooting with little or no delay, up to 3 fps in a continuous burst of up to 144 frames in JPEG capture mode. Designed to serve both techies and digital newbies, the D70 allows you to customize the menus to display both simple and advanced options. Its seven new Digital Vari-Program selections provide high-quality auto operation, while the full range of manual operations is also available.

**MSRP: \$1,499.95. [www.nikonslr.com](http://www.nikonslr.com)**

## Professional Digital SLR Over \$3,000

### 2 Canon EOS-1D Mark II

In a landmark for this contest, the Canon EOS-1D Mark II digital camera scored a unanimous victory in this heretofore extremely competitive category. The judges were simply wowed by the Mark II, touted in some parts as the world's fastest DSLR. With the ability to capture 8-megapixel JPEGs at 8.5 fps in continuous bursts of up to 40 frames, the Mark II certainly has the speed to outdistance its competitors. But Canon didn't slack off in the image quality department either.

The Mark II represents a dramatic improvement over the original EOS-1D, with double the resolution in the CMOS sensor (4.1 to 8.2 megapixels), twice the high-speed memory buffer, and dual 32-bit RISC CPUs to separately operate the camera's auto focus and lens drive. The exterior and chassis are built of weather-resistant magnesium alloy, and there are more than 70 gaskets and seals to protect the camera's innards from the elements. The Mark II's lens mount is stainless steel, and the shutter has been durability tested to 200,000 exposures.

**MSRP: \$4,499. [www.consumer.usa.canon.com](http://www.consumer.usa.canon.com)**

## One-shot Digital Back

### 3 Phase One P 25

In another unanimous decision, our judges selected the Phase One P 25 as the hottest one-shot, medium-format digital back in 2004. The tether-free P 25 back delivers 22-megapixel image files, in very close to full 6x4.5 format. Judges were impressed by its new RAW image file technology, which can record compressed RAW files without any loss of quality. The compact back is energy efficient, housing its own camcorder battery and CompactFlash card, so photographers can capture tons of images during long shoots. For outdoor shoots, the back has a large preview screen that is easily viewable in daylight. Time between exposures is 1.7 seconds. The P 25 fits all Hasselblad V series and H1 cameras, as well as the Mamiya 645 AFD and Contax 645.

**MSRP: \$32,990. [www.phaseone.com](http://www.phaseone.com)**





### Multi-shot Digital Back

#### 1 Imacon Ixpress 528C

Scoring big points for tethered or un-tethered versatility, compatibility with many medium-format cameras, and high-res capabilities, the Imacon Ixpress 528C won over our judges. This multi-shot back can be used for 22-megapixel image capture in single and 4-shot mode or 88 megapixels in 16-shot mode (with no color interpolation in 4- and 16-shot modes), at a capture rate up to one frame every 2 seconds. Its Image Bank stores up to 850 22-megapixel images. Imacon FlexColor 3.6.6 software quickly converts the captures from the proprietary FFF file format to the desired output format.

**MSRP: \$29,995. [www.imacon.dk](http://www.imacon.dk)**



## DIGITAL STORAGE MEDIA



### Removable Storage Card

#### 1 Lexar Media 8GB CompactFlash

In the removable storage card category, the judges went for the big boy, Lexar's new 8GB CompactFlash. The card delivers a 40X write speed, for a minimum sustained rate of 6MB of image data per second. Compatible with a variety of digital camera makes, the 8GB CompactFlash card is designed for pro shooters who routinely produce image files of 8MB and larger. With a large controller buffer, the card supports the transfer of up to 32 sectors of data in one command. Bundled with every 8GB Lexar card is a free copy of Lexar's award-winning Image Rescue 2.0 image recovery software.

**MSRP: \$2,999. [www.lexarmedia.com](http://www.lexarmedia.com)**

### Portable Storage Device

#### 2 Lexar Media JumpDrive 2.0 Pro 80X

Lexar Media scored a clean sweep of the digital storage media categories with the JumpDrive 2.0 Pro 80X. The newest addition to Lexar's line of USB flash drives, the JumpDrive 2.0 features a minimum sustained read/write rate of 12MB per second. Like all other Lexar JumpDrive products, the JumpDrive 2.0 is a USB 2.0 device that's backward-compatible with USB 1.1 ports. The drive is completely compatible with Windows 2000/Me/XP, Mac OS 8.6+ and Mac OS X.

**MSRP: \$64.99-\$299.99 (256MB – 1GB). [www.lexarmedia.com](http://www.lexarmedia.com)**



# LIGHTING EQUIPMENT



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## Studio Lighting System

### 1 Elinchrom Digital Style 600RX

Specially designed for digital photography, the Elinchrom Digital Style 600RX won kudos for its precision, consistency and color temperature. The RX monoblocs have a lightweight, die-cast alloy chassis surrounded by a high-impact translucent body made of the same material used in auto racing helmets. The 600RX interfaces with both Windows and Mac systems to allow remote control of all functions via computer, including modeling lamp control. The 600RX has output control in 1/10-stop increments, rapid recycle (0.3 – 1.5 second), action-freezing flash duration (1/2,050 second) and a five-volt trigger that ensures delivery of the light head's full power to a digital camera without harm to the electronics.

**MSRP: \$1,691. [www.bogenimaging.us](http://www.bogenimaging.us)**

## Camera Flash

### 2 Sigma EF 500 DG Super Flash

Available for both Nikon and Canon digital cameras, the Sigma EF 500 DG Super Flash is a dedicated electronic flash unit. The EF 500 DG Super Flash comes with i-TTL and 3-D Matrix exposure control for Nikon cameras, and is compatible with similar features in other camera lines. The flash retains the features of previous EF 500 Super Flash models, including a GN of 100 at ISO 100, 28mm wide-angle coverage (GN 165 at 105mm), full zoom (28-105mm plus a built-in 17mm wide-angle panel), bounce and swivel capabilities, an LCD panel with full flash information, wireless flash and slave functions, manual output control, and FP (high speed) and rear curtain sync.

**MSRP: \$289. [www.sigma-photo.com](http://www.sigma-photo.com)**

## Portable Light Unit

### 3 Quantum Qflash T4d

Loaded with features, the Quantum Qflash T4d stood alone as this year's hottest portable light unit. The Qflash T4d works with the latest camera systems via a special QTTL-dedicated exposure control. The Qflash also has manual, auto, TTL and strobe modes. In automatic mode, Qflash power adjusts to 25 different levels in 1/3-step increments, from f/1.4 to f/22. In manual mode, it displays 19 power settings from full to 1/64 power, also in 1/3-step increments. Parabolic reflectors produce soft, clean light, and are quickly interchangeable for bare bulb, wide angle, diffused and telephoto reflectors. Flash heads can swivel and bounce to lock into position with one-button control, and the new back-slanted design balances the unit for stable bracket mounting. The Qflash T4d can coordinate multiple-flash setups through control cables, or wirelessly via FREEXWIRE digital transceivers. The power generated by the Qflash T4d exceeds typical shoe-mounted and handle-mounted flashes, allowing photographers to work at greater distances and draw more power for flash bouncing.

**MSRP: \$775. [www.qtm.com](http://www.qtm.com)**

## Light Modifier

### ④ F.J. Westcott Master's Brush

The Master's Brush from Westcott is a self-feathering, directional light source in a portable 16x22-inch soft box. It's designed to create defined shadows to enhance depth and add contour to the subject. The multi-layer front panel of the Master's Brush works with a barn door and internal baffle to create a 2-f/stop differential between the center of the light and the outer edges. This difference allows photographers to more easily achieve the techniques of split, broad and short lighting, including all the variations of Rembrandt and Butterfly Lighting. The Master's Brush can be purchased as a complete assembly or in components.  
**MSRP: \$299.90. [www.fjwestcott.com](http://www.fjwestcott.com)**

## Lighting Accessory

### ⑤ Broncolor Mini Satellite

Characterized by its soft-edged light, the Broncolor Mini Satellite reflector produces even, clean light with a minimum of stray light. Used properly, it can provide both a hard, directional light and a high light output. At just over 12 pounds, the Mini Satellite is portable enough for on-location jobs. Fully adjustable and easily movable, the Mini Satellite's focusing arm can be folded and stored parallel to the reflector for use as a carrying handle.  
**MSRP: \$1,485. [www.sinarbron.com](http://www.sinarbron.com)**

## Light Meter

### ⑥ Sekonic L-558 DualMaster

The Sekonic L-558 DualMaster was an easy choice for the judges. The multi-function meter reads reflected flash down to f/2 at ISO 100, twice as low as any other meter in its class. The L-558 includes Sekonic's built-in, retractable Lumisphere, which extends for 3-D incident readings and retracts for a narrow incident metering angle that works well for brightness evaluation, lighting ratio setup or reading flat subjects. A true one-degree spot meter, the L-558 has a parallax-free viewfinder and infinder, as well as an illuminated digital display that shows apertures in tenths, shutter speeds up to 1/8,000 second and exposure compensation values. It can't simultaneously read both flash and ambient light, and display combined flash-ambient readings, percentage of flash in the total exposure and simultaneous display of flash, ambient and combined readings on an analog scale. The L-558 also takes an optional PocketWizard transmitter.  
**MSRP: \$549. [www.sekonic.com](http://www.sekonic.com)**

## Power Pack

### ⑦ XtremePower XP10 and XP20

These lightweight, rechargeable batteries have enough juice to power cameras, flashes, laptops and just about every other piece of electronic equipment you'd want to bring to a shoot. Available in two models, the XP10 and XP20, the XtremePower packs use lithium-ion batteries for consistent power, even in low temperatures. Smart Cable technology helps the units automatically detect the proper voltage required by a device, eliminating power dips or surges for a safe, consistent voltage. Both the models will recharge the internal battery of a device, while simultaneously powering it. XtremePower packs can fully recharge in only four hours, while continuing to provide energy for other devices. The XP20 model includes dual power output ports for powering two devices at once.  
**MSRP: \$549. [www.xtremepowerusa.com](http://www.xtremepowerusa.com)**





### Wide Zoom Lens

#### ① smc Pentax-DA 16-45mm f/4 ED AL

Designed as a companion lens for the Pentax \*ist D digital SLR, the image circle in the smc Pentax-DA 16-45mm f/4 ED AL lens perfectly matches the 23.5x15.7mm-CCD of the camera. It features a 3X zoom ratio with focal lengths covering the angle of view equivalent to 24.5-69mm in the 35mm format. The Pentax DA series has a responsive Quick-Shift Focus System that allows photographers to instantly switch from auto to manual with a slight twist of the focus ring. The lens incorporates an extra-low dispersion (ED) glass lens element and two aspherical lens elements for true-to-life image reproduction and overall size reduction.

**MSRP: \$549.95. [www.pentaxusa.com](http://www.pentaxusa.com)**



### Standard Zoom Lens

#### ② Sigma 18-125mm f/3.5-5.6 DC

Edging out some tough competition from another Sigma lens, the 24-60mm f/2.8, Sigma scored the victory in the standard zoom lens category for its versatile Sigma 18-125mm f/3.5-5.6 DC. Built exclusively for digital SLRs, the lens gives focal lengths equivalent to 28-200mm in the 35mm format. The 18-125mm f/3.5-5.6 DC is constructed with special low dispersion glass and aspherical elements. An internal focus system enables convenient use of the included "petal" type lens hood or optional circular polarizing filter. Photographers can achieve focus as close as 19.6 inches at all zoom settings.

**MSRP: \$323. [www.sigma-photo.com](http://www.sigma-photo.com)**

### Telephoto Zoom Lens

#### ③ Tamron SP AF 200-500mm f/5-6.3 Di LD [IF]

Compact and lightweight, the Tamron SP AF 200-500mm f/5-6.3 Di LD [IF] lens impressed our judges with its efficient design and Di designation, which guarantees excellent images on film and digital SLR cameras from Canon, Minolta and Nikon. The lens features a filter effect control that allows users to employ filters like a circular polarizer without taking the hood off the lens. Minimum focus distance for this ultra telephoto is 98.4 inches.

**MSRP: \$1,454. [www.tamron.com](http://www.tamron.com)**



## Wide-angle Lens

### ④ smc Pentax-DA 14mm f/2.8 ED [IF] interchangeable wide-angle

Notching up Pentax's second win in the lens categories is the smc Pentax-DA 14mm f/2.8 ED [IF] interchangeable wide-angle lens. Like the Pentax-DA 16-45mm f/4 ED AL, this lens has been built to ideally conform to the 23.5x15.7mm CCD used in the Pentax \*ist D camera. Also like the DA 16-45mm f/4, the 14mm f/2.8 features the Quick-Shift Focus System. It's the second model in the new DA series, a mini-sized offering that weighs a mere 14.8 ounces and measures only 2.7 inches long and 3.3 inches in diameter. With a focal length of 14mm (equivalent to 21mm in the 35mm format) and a 90-degree angle of view, the DA 14mm f/2.8 uses a high-refraction, low-dispersion glass element and an extra-low dispersion (ED) glass element to produce high-resolution digital images. With a minimum focusing distance of 6.72 inches, the DA 14mm f/2.8 provides a maximum magnification of approximately 0.19X. The lens accepts 77mm-diameter filters, including a circular polarizing filter, and comes equipped with a detachable lens hood with a window for easy adjustment of that circular polarizing filter.

**MSRP: \$799. [www.pentaxusa.com](http://www.pentaxusa.com)**



## Manual-focus Lens

### ⑤ The Original Lensbaby

With a cute name and even cuter price tag, The Original Lensbaby captured this year's manual-focus lens category. The Original Lensbaby flexible camera lens creates a circular sweet spot of sharp focus. Photographers can move the spot around the image by bending the pliable lens tubing, which moves the glass optic out of a parallel position to the image capture plane, similar to a tilt-shift lens. Though similar in principle to the workings of old bellows camera, the Lensbaby is designed specifically for today's digital photographer. Parts of the composition farther from the focus spot will be recorded with artistic blurring and prismatic color distortions. Photographers can control the size of the sharp area and the degree of blur by using one of four aperture settings: f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6 and f/8.

**MSRP: \$96. [www.lensbabies.com](http://www.lensbabies.com)**



## Medium-format Lens

### ⑥ Carl Zeiss 40mm CFE IF f/4.0 T\* Lens

It wouldn't be a lens competition without a Zeiss lens getting in the mix. Taking home the award for hottest medium-format lens is the Carl Zeiss Distagon 40mm CFE IF f/4.0, a wide-angle lens designed specifically for Hasselblad V-System cameras. Built with digital photography in mind, the CFE lens has an electrical interface for transferring lens data to 203FE and 205FCC cameras for automatic aperture priority exposure. Recent improvements in the Zeiss CFE line include a new internal design and advanced anti-reflection materials that reduce stray light for enhanced image contrast. The lens works via a floating mechanism, which uses a single focusing ring to accomplish internal focusing. Focus range is from 0.5 meters (1.6 feet) to infinity.

**MSRP: \$4,667. [www.hasselbladusa.com](http://www.hasselbladusa.com)**





# OUTPUT



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## Digital Printer Under \$1,000

### 1 Canon i9900 Photo Printer

Fighting off a packed field, the Canon i9900 Photo Printer was the judges' choice in the sub-one-grand price category. The 13x19-inch inkjet printer features added red and green ink cartridges for more accurate color rendition, 4,800x2,400-dpi maximum resolution, 2-picoliter ink droplets, and USB 2.0 Hi-speed and FireWire interfaces. First in its class to offer eight individual ink tanks, the i9900 uses Canon's exclusive ChromaPLUS 8-color ink system, which adds red and green inks to the standard six (a 60-percent increase in the orange/red gamut, and 30-percent increase in the green gamut over a typical six-color printing device). The print head is the longest and highest-density print head in the consumer market, and has Canon's MicroFine Droplet Technology for smooth gradations. The i9900 supports full-bleed printing at 4x6, 5x7, 8.5x11 and 13x19 inches.

**MSRP: \$499. [www.consumer.usa.canon.com](http://www.consumer.usa.canon.com)**

## Digital Printer Over \$1,000

### 2 Epson Stylus Pro 4000

The Epson Stylus Pro 4000 was the overwhelming choice in this category. The Stylus Pro 4000 uses Epson's UltraChrome Ink technology to produce archival prints with impressive color fidelity and stability. The print head handles up to eight ink cartridges simultaneously, including both Photo Black and Matte Black for maximum density. The 1-inch-wide print head produces 2,880x1,440-dpi resolution. The Stylus Pro 4000 can handle a variety of rolled media up to 17 inches wide, or cut sheets up to 17x22 inches in its high-capacity paper tray. Media can be loaded in four ways, including a front-loading, straight-through path for items as thick as 1.5mm.

**MSRP: \$1,795. [www.epson.com](http://www.epson.com)**

## Black-and-White Paper

### 3 Kodak Professional Polycontrast IV RC

Featuring excellent highlight detail and a long tonal scale, Kodak Professional Polycontrast IV RC paper combines Kodak's best technologies in resin-coated papers for flexibility in optical processing. Polycontrast IV RC is made for professional fine art and commercial photographers who place a high premium on rich blacks and clean whites.

**MSRP: Price varies by retailer. [www.kodak.com](http://www.kodak.com)**

## Photo Quality Printer Paper

### 4 Moab Entrada Fine Art

This is a new category for the 2004 awards, and boy, was it popular. Moab Paper Company emerged from the tussle with its dual-sided, all-cotton rag Entrada Fine Art Brilliant White 190 paper. Available in two weights, Entrada is water-resistant and quick-drying. It's compatible with dye- and pigment-based inks and the latest Epson UltraChrome inks. Also available without optical brighteners (Entrada Fine Art Natural 190).

**MSRP: Starting at \$21 (25 sheets-8.5x11 inches). [www.moabpaper.com](http://www.moabpaper.com)**



# SCANNING



## Film Scanner

### 1 Nikon Super Coolscan 5000 ED

The Super Coolscan 5000 ED delivers 135/IX240 film scanning at a rate of 20 seconds per image, with optical resolution of 4,000 ppi. The scanner comes equipped with a number of time-saving accessories, including a slide feeder and roll film adapter, which accommodate a variety of slide mounts and uncut film. Other features include a high-quality Scanner Nikkor ED lens with extra-low dispersion (ED) glass lens elements and a low-heat LED light source that takes no time to warm up and won't damage film like a halogen or fluorescent lamp. The ED glass and LED lighting help optimize the effectiveness of Nikon's Digital ICE<sup>4</sup> Advanced components. Nikon's Color Management System helps provide accurate reproduction of image data on monitors and printouts.

**MSRP: \$1,099.95. [www.nikoncoolscan.com](http://www.nikoncoolscan.com)**



## Flatbed Scanner

### 2 Microtek ScanMaker i900

With a dual-media, twin-plate design, Microtek's ScanMaker i900 delivers accurate, high-res scans from its 8.5x14-inch scanning area. It employs automatic color correction for prints and film, and Microtek's patented E.D.I.T. emulsion-direct film scanning. SnapTrans film holders permit batch scanning of several film formats, and an additional glass tray allows scanning of 8x10 film and odd-sized transparencies. With built-in Kodak Digital ICE, the ScanMaker i900 automatically reconstructs damaged photo prints and removes the more serious physical damage. The ScanMaker i900 has 3,200x6,400-ppi optical resolution, 48-bit color, multiple sampling for image optimization and both USB 2 and FireWire compatibility for Windows and Macintosh. Bundled with the scanner are SilverFast Ai6 with NegaFix, Microtek ScanWizard Pro, Microtek Scanner Profiler with Kodak IT-8 reflective and transparency calibration targets, Adobe Photoshop Elements 2, Adobe Photoshop Album for PC and ABBYY FineReader Sprint OCR.

**MSRP: \$599.99. [www.microtekusa.com](http://www.microtekusa.com)**



## Multi-format Film Scanner

### 3 Imacon Flextight 949

Heralded by Imacon as "the fastest high-end scanner in the world," the Flextight 949 certainly delivers a lot of speed for its near-\$20,000 price tag—up to 200MB per minute. The Flextight 949 can scan a variety of film formats, including 35mm, panoramic and all sizes up to 4x5-inch film. Optional bulk feeders can be attached to boost productivity for high-volume jobs. Imacon's Flextight technology makes for high-quality scans via the easy-to-use FlexColor interface.

**MSRP: \$19,995. [www.imacon.dk](http://www.imacon.dk)**



# STUDIO & LOCATION EQUIPMENT



## Background

### ① Virtual Backgrounds Spectravue 300

For the second consecutive year, Virtual Backgrounds' Spectravue has captured a Hot1 Award, showing us that the Digital Age isn't just for cameras. The Spectravue 300 background projection device is more lightweight and portable than the two previous models. The Spectravue 300 includes a 35-80mm projection zoom lens for sizing the background to the subject. Because Spectravue is optically based, photographers can see both the background and the subject in the camera's viewfinder. The composite of background and subject is complete at the time of exposure.

**MSRP includes a two-day workshop: \$3,579. [www.virtualbackgrounds.net](http://www.virtualbackgrounds.net)**

## Camera Bag

### ② Lowepro Rolling Mini Trekker AW

A backpack and a rolling bag all in one, the Lowepro Rolling Mini Trekker AW impressed our judges with its versatility. The bag has sealed bearing wheels that provide shock absorption and protect the bottom of the bag. The single-tube extendable handle reduces weight and bulk over models with a double-tube design. To convert the bag to backpack mode, just untuck the ergonomic harness and waist belt. The bag's padded interior dividers can be reconfigured to handle a variety of equipment. Small individual pockets provide storage for pens, cell phones, PDAs and other compact devices.

**MSRP: \$241.99. [www.lowepro.com](http://www.lowepro.com)**

## Camera Case

### ③ Porter Case Stowaway 20-20

New from Porter Case, the Stowaway 20-20 meets ATA-300 specifications for airline shipping cases. The tough-shell Stowaway is part of Porter Case's Total Travel System, which pairs larger shipping cases with hard-sided carryon cases, all of which convert into a cart for easy rolling transport. Successive cases can be linked via male-female channels and carried as one unit. The Stowaway measures 20x20x12.5 inches. It's made of polyethylene plastic with a cloth-lined interior. The outside of the case has ATA-style bumped-out corners to protect the heavy-duty twist latches, steel hinges and side loop handles.

**MSRP: \$ 229. [www.portercase.com](http://www.portercase.com)**

## Tripod and Camera Stand

### ④ Manfrotto 322RC2 Grip Action Ball Head

Engineered for fast-action photography, the Manfrotto 322RC2 Grip Action Ball Head can be adjusted with one hand. The head can be used with a variety of cameras, including digital SLRs and traditional film cameras, from 35mm to medium format. It rotates 360 degrees around the vertical axis and does a +/-90-degree lateral tilt. The 322RC2 has a built-in bubble spirit level for finding the horizon, as well as an optional electronic shutter release. The Quick Action Hand Grip allows photographers to unlock the head and readjust the camera at the same time. Holds up to 11 pounds.

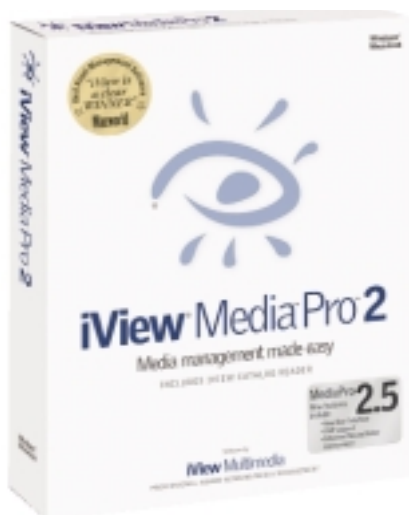
**MSRP: \$142. [www.bogenimaging.us](http://www.bogenimaging.us)**



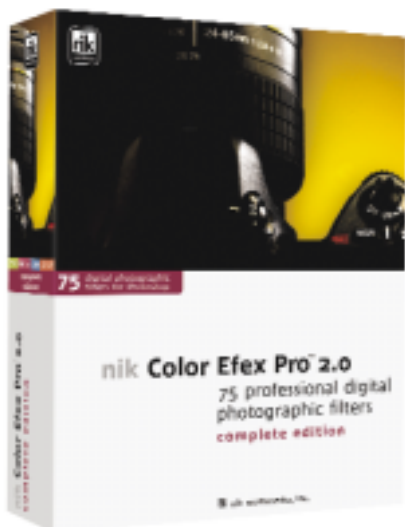
# SOFTWARE & INTERNET SERVICES



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## Studio Management Software

### 1 StudioPlus Software 5.5

StudioPlus fought off some very tough competition from SuccessWare and Granite Bear's Photo One to capture its third consecutive Hot1 Award. All three applications were judge's favorites—and in many ways deserving of the award—but in the end, the combination of studio management and digital workflow features in StudioPlus won out. Version 5.5 has an improved Scheduling Wizard that can be fully integrated with a Palm or Pocket PC device. There is an improved QuickBooks in the accounting portion of the software, and a new Custom Report Generator that allows users to create reports from scratch. StudioPlus also has a section that guides users through digital image sales presentations, and features for organizing and tracking digital workflow. Version 5.5 can integrate with several other applications, including Fuji StudioMaster PRO, Kodak ProShots, Phase One Portrait One, ImageWare's PDI Studio, Express Digital and Collages.net.

**MSRP: Profession Version \$1,495, Lite Version \$395.**  
[www.studioplussoftware.com](http://www.studioplussoftware.com)

## Image Management and Presentation Software

### 2 iView MediaPro 2.5

iView MediaPro is a media management, presentation, editing, publishing and cataloging application for digital photographers. The multi-dimensional system can be used as a media browser and organizer, a media presentation system or a drag-and-drop palette for use with another media editor, multimedia scripting system or HTML authoring application. iView MediaPro supports over 130 file formats, including various digital camera standards. It allows users to generate customized, multi-grid slide shows, Web galleries, digital movies, catalog layouts and contact sheets. With a footprint of only 2MB/8RAM, the program will run in the background with other apps in use. The drag-and-drop features are compatible with both Mac OS and Windows systems.

**MSRP: \$199.** [www.iview-multimedia.com](http://www.iview-multimedia.com)

## Image-editing Plug-ins

### 3 nik Color Efex Pro 2.0

From nik multimedia, the Color Efex Pro 2.0 Complete Edition is a collection of 75 digital photographic filters, such as black-and-white infrared, cross processing, neutral density and polarization filters. This newest generation of Color Efex Pro has more than 30 new filters, and all 75 filters carry 16-bit functionality. Other improvements include a new

interface, updated functionality for all of the previous nik Color Efex Pro filters and advanced control over highlights and shadows. As a companion to Adobe Photoshop, Color Efex Pro empowers users of varying skill levels to produce more pro-grade enhancements than using Photoshop alone. With the new Selective module, users can selectively apply any filter from Color Efex Pro 2.0 to any part of an image with a pressure-sensitive Wacom tablet.

**MSRP: \$299.95. [www.nikmultimedia.com](http://www.nikmultimedia.com)**

## Color Management System

### ④ ColorVision SpectroPRO Suite

Color management is an ever-present concern for digital photography studios. Luckily, there are products like ColorVision SpectroPRO to make the task easier. ColorVision created the SpectroPro Suite as a total color management solution for professionals who want integrated monitor calibration and printer profiling. The SpectroPRO Suite works with both Windows and Mac OS, and it's compatible with most popular image editing tools and printers. The suite bundle includes the SpectroPRO Spectrocolorimeter for measuring a range of calibration targets, a new Patch Reader software utility for reading color targets and reducing patch-reading errors, printer profile-building ProfilerPRO (3.0), DoctorPRO software for editing profiles with the full Adobe Photoshop toolset for color manipulation, and the USB SpyderPRO colorimeter with OptiCAL software for use on both LCD and CRT displays.

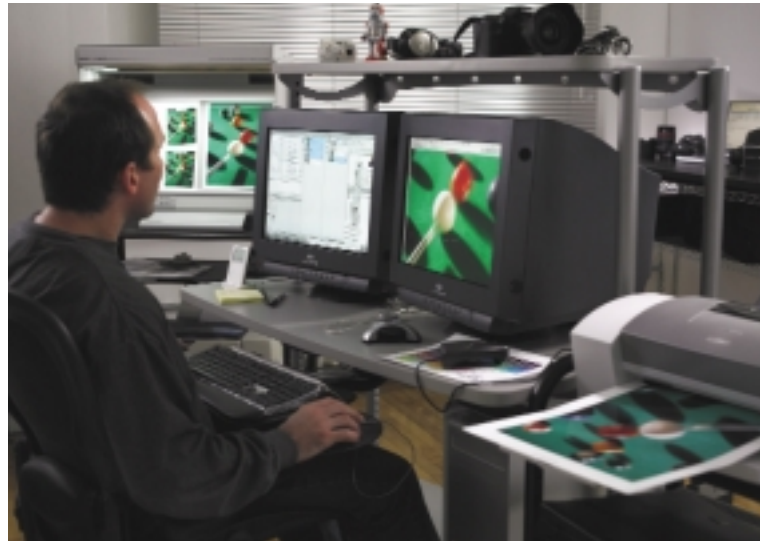
**MSRP: \$999. [www.colorvision.com](http://www.colorvision.com)**

## Online Photography Services

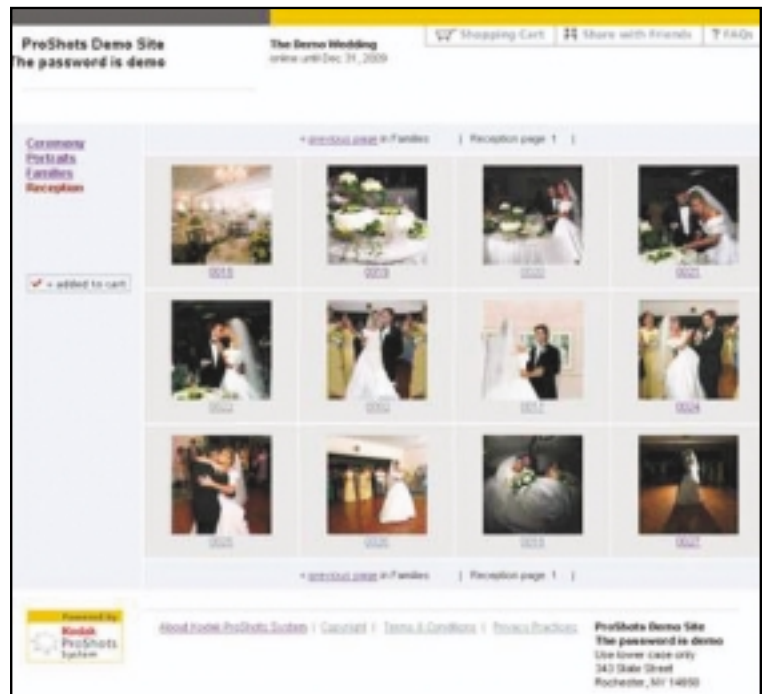
### ⑥ Kodak ProShots Basics Software

This is another category that has grown dramatically in recent years, and this year it was one of the most contended. In the end, Kodak ProShots Basics pulled ahead of the peloton to cross the finish line in first place, for the second consecutive time. It's possible that our judges simply liked ProShots Basics' price tag (free), but it's more likely that they were impressed by the software's simplification of the image-ordering process for photographers and professional labs. The downloadable application allows photographers to easily select and organize images, proof and complete prints, and submit orders over the Internet or by CD to their lab. It is a scalable system with image-viewing capabilities that include 90-degree rotation, image select/de-select and the ability to specify print size and quantity. There is a cropping tool with partial image rotation and WYSIWYG rendering for digital template catalog listings. If anything goes wrong, users can contact Kodak's service center 24/7. Not bad for zero dollars.

**MSRP: Free. [www.kodak.com/proshots/basicsinfo](http://www.kodak.com/proshots/basicsinfo)**



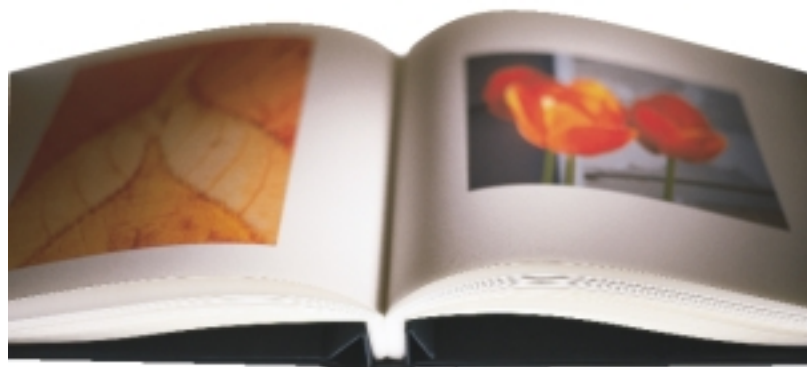
④



⑥



# ALBUMS & FRAMES



1



2

3



## Traditional Photo Album

### 1 Ztra Digital Perfect Bound Album

This year's competition reveals that the "traditional photo album" is evolving. As digital imaging changes the way consumers buy, collect and display images, photographers need diverse choices to suit their clients' needs. That's where the Ztra Digital Perfect Bound Albums come in. These albums straddle the line between traditional photo albums and new-style digital direct-print albums. The leather books hold up to 20 two-sided photo matte paper pages that are inkjet printable. The pages slip easily into the book cover to produce a hardbound photo album that looks like it was made at a publishing house. The books are available in three sizes: 7x7, 10x10 and 11x14 inches. The covers are black leather with a debossed square on the cover. The white inkjet-printable pages are archival, and can be printed on both sides with any digital printer. Purchasers can go to [www.albumsinc.com](http://www.albumsinc.com) to download templates and ICC profiles.

**MSRP: Starts at \$69.35.**

[www.albumsinc.com/products/ztra.php](http://www.albumsinc.com/products/ztra.php)

## Direct-print Photo Album

### 2 MyPublisher Pocket Book

Rather than presenting clients with loose prints or proofs, our judges favored using MyPublisher Pocket Books to display small images. With this software, photographers can make their own Pocket Books with up to 80 photos (20 pages included, extra pages \$0.49 each). Pocket Books are 6x8 inches, four-color offset printed on heavyweight, archival, acid-free paper. Professionally perfect bound, the books come in a choice of 11 album jackets.

**MSRP: \$9.95; additional pages \$0.49 each.**

[www.mypublisher.com](http://www.mypublisher.com)

## Photo Album Design Software

### 3 LumaPix::FotoFusion v3 PRO

LumaPix::FotoFusion is a nifty software application for creating photo-compositions, albums, portraits and contact sheets. A patent-pending automatic layout mechanism produces layouts quickly and efficiently, and resolution-independent rendering allows your images to be processed for any size output, without loss of detail. Integrated sharing tools include embedded e-mail, direct FTP publishing, large-format printing and direct interaction with photo labs and frame and album manufacturers.

**MSRP: \$199.95 for an annual subscription.**

[www.lumapix.com](http://www.lumapix.com)

**Frame**

**④ Epoch Arts Koga Antique Stained**

Made of solid wood moulding, the Antique Stained version of the Koga frame has a hand-distressed, natural look. The newly designed wooden easel on the back supports either vertical or horizontal display. The coloring and style of the Koga Antique Stained are well suited for outdoor and sepia-toned photographs. Available for 4x5-, 4x6-, 5x5-, 5x7- and 8x10-inch prints.

**MSRP: \$40 for a 5x7 frame. [www.epocharts.com](http://www.epocharts.com)**

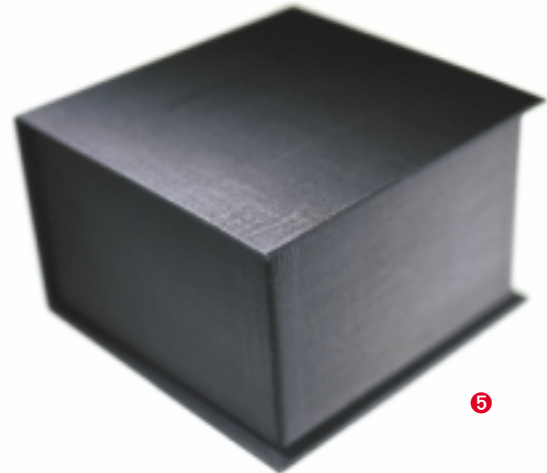


**Alternative Display Item**

**⑤ Ztra 4x6-inch Proof Box**

The judges awarded Ztra its second Hot1 Award for the 4x6-inch Proof Box. Measuring 7.25x7.125x4.75 inches, the box is an elegant option for showcasing up to 500 proof prints. Designed to let people flip through proofs index style, the box has a center divider to keep photos secure and organized. The box has clean contours, a black linen cloth finish and a 3x3-inch stamped indentation on the lid.

**MSRP: \$44. [www.albumsinc.com/products/ztra.php](http://www.albumsinc.com/products/ztra.php)**



**Novelty /Add-on Sales Item**

**⑥ Neil Enterprises Sports Bottle**

Neil Enterprises continues its strong tradition of niche-market novelty items with its new Sports Bottle, a 15-ounce sports drink container that displays a sports photo of someone's favorite little athlete. The bottle has a twist-off top and a nearly unbreakable body. Photos can be mounted on the supplied All Sport insert, or the bottles can be customized with a 4x10.625-inch image. There's even a twist-off storage compartment on the bottom of the bottle.

**MSRP: \$6.99 each sold separately; \$3 each in cases of 24. [www.neilenterprises.com](http://www.neilenterprises.com)**

