

An early adopter reports on how Apple Aperture works for his photography studio.

BY CHARLES MARING

# All-round APPLE APERTURE *answer*



Courtesy of Apple

At the all-digital Maring studio, we've long awaited image management software that's powerful, quick, portable and simple to use, which will not only keep our data safe, but also allow us to find files with ease. Apple Aperture 1.5.2 is a big leap closer to being that streamlined solution. It is our studio's core software for sales, workflow, and data management.

The first version of Aperture was on the right track, but it was lacking in performance.

The latest Aperture allows our studio to use RAW file capture and still provide immediate previews for clients. Immediately after the portrait session, I quickly choose my favorites, delete unwanted images, crop, and display select images in a variety of looks, such as color, black and white and sepia. In minutes, we show clients our picks along with the rest of the session's images, and they marvel at the image clarity and color integrity. We increase

sales averages by selling while the client is excited, and have higher client satisfaction as well. For busy clients, it's a big plus when they don't need to return for an image presentation.

Dual monitor support also adds to the client's experience. After the initial edit, we pull up thumbnails up on a 23-inch cinema display while we show the client full-screen images on a 30-inch display. Using the number keypad, we can quickly narrow down and rate the choices; five stars is definitely; three stars is maybe; no star is a reject and we won't see it again. Clients can compare three or more huge images side by side on the cinema display, and feel confident in their decisions. We can zoom and pan multiple raw images at the same time, as a fast, effective way to show details. Users can even customize the incredibly flexible interface to best support their workflow.

We save file storage space by archiving

only the images purchased, which makes a big difference in managing terabytes of data every year. To initiate immediate backup, we transfer the images to the Aperture Vault.

Aperture 1.5 introduced crucial file management improvements. You can import your images to the Aperture library or keep them where they are and simply create a catalog. You can copy the catalog to a laptop for presentations and reconnect when you get back to the office. If you work on location with your laptop, you can export the catalog with high-resolution data and add the project to your in-studio library.

Aperture's built-in presentation tools allow you to run slideshows from your catalogs or create custom Web galleries with ease. You can design slideshows to run across multiple monitors, use dissolves, and even set up a mix in your iTunes library that will synch the presentation to end with the selected music.

My wish list for future Aperture versions would include the ability to publish slideshows directly to QuickTime or burn a video DVD. Currently, the best solution is spending \$79 for the iLife suite, which includes iDVD, iPhoto, iWeb, iMovie, and GarageBand, giving you tons of tools for professional presentation.

As a wedding photographer, I'd also love to be able to create catalogs and slideshows



After the shoot, the photographer runs the show from a 23-inch cinema display while the client views the results on the 30-inch cinema display.

## THE GOODS: SOFTWARE



With flexible viewing options, you can quickly set your interface to suit your workflow, from three-up comparisons for the client's first edit to a full-screen view perfect for showing off detail and color effects.

never been more vibrant. The Exposure adjustments work great, and the Highlights & Shadows levels give you complete control over details as well. I find myself using the Monochrome mixer to create all sorts of black-and-white versions for client review. You can create and save an array of custom black-and-white looks to apply to any image.

With the 1.5 version of Aperture we've noticed increased performance with our Quad Power PC, but the new Intel-based Macs take Aperture to new heights. Our 17-inch MacBook Pro with 2GB RAM performs similarly to our Quad G5 with 8GB RAM, and the MacBook Pro will even run a second 30-inch monitor perfectly.

Aperture offers some nice features for printing or saving images as PDFs. Photographers can create and order custom books or simply save the book as a PDF for sharing. I'm still waiting for a few features to emerge, though. It would be nice to design contact sheets with a choice of background colors, drop shadows, image borders, headers and footers, and then export them to a new folder as JPEGs instead of printing them. I'd like to output custom contact sheets on Silver Halide printers and save the contact sheet files in case a page gets damaged. The ability to control the size and resolution of the images in the contact sheets would also be a nice alternative to the automated process that's now based on your choice of the Aperture layouts.

There are numerous additional useful features in Aperture, but I've only mentioned the ones at the core of our workflow.

There's always room for development, but Apple has achieved its vision to create an application that produces impeccable image quality, manages huge amounts of data, and is a phenomenal point of sale solution. I highly recommend Aperture for Intel-based Mac users. It has revolutionized the way our studio operates and I am eager to see what comes next. ■

that are viewable on any platform, with print and save controls for security, that I could burn and distribute to clients. Web galleries are great, but if your client doesn't have a high-speed connection, viewing an entire wedding shoot online can turn into a chore.

Our studio portraits require no color adjustment. Images captured at weddings and events

are another story, and I am in love with Aperture's new color controls. Aperture calls the floating panels of related controls *heads-up displays* or HUDs. The Adjustments HUD has a Color section for individual colors and hues. Choose cyan and you can enhance the saturation of the sky to a degree that would fall apart in an 8-bit JPEG. Our colors have