



PREPRESS-A-RONI

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

BY LERRICK STARR

MY TRAVEL BUDDY AND I JET AWAY FROM LESTER B. PEARSON Airport early on a Saturday afternoon, officially destined for the Seybold Conference and trade show.

He's there as the publisher of this magazine, but I confess to having a secret agenda. If there's one place in the United States that has been on my must-see list since childhood, it's San Francisco.

I remember so vividly...the smell, the flavour, and the oh-so-mysterious contents. Yes, that first bowl of Rice-A-Roni opened my eyes to a world full of sublime pleasures, and I was determined to get a taste of it.

So we're in midflight, ready to be served our meal, and I'm disappointed to learn that Rice-A-Roni isn't part of our Air Canada fare. What better way, I think to myself, to acclimatize travellers to their destination than with a little of the 'San Francisco Treat'?

So I choose the beef dinner over the chicken.

heart out of some poor sap and show it to him before he dies but I've never been to a place where they pull out the whole cow bit by bit and show it to you until you die — or at least order something.

DAY ONE—CAREFUL SURVEILLANCE

I get up early for breakfast at the Pinecrest Diner. The cook's name is Al. Real friendly fellow, until he overhears me ask the waitress for a side of Rice-A-Roni with my eggs. To the left and right diners pause, toast suspended in mid-air as their heads pirouette.

I mumble a few words about being Canadian and hope it's enough.

We take a walk over to the Moscone Center. Through some sleight-of-hand I manage to sneak onto the show floor. I take the time to watch workgangs straining to put the bits together.

That evening I score a sushi dinner with the Dynagram gang. Hot, cold and milky saki flows. Conversation flows. I fold.

Did you know that the rear of every cable car in San Francisco bears an advertisement for Rice-A-Roni?

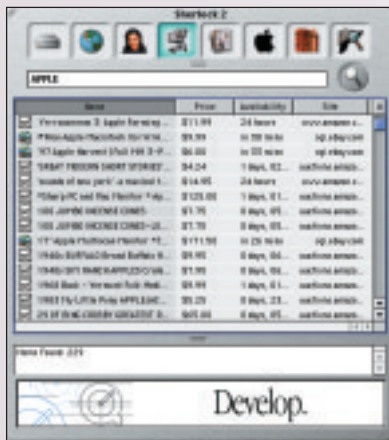
DAY TWO—THE APPLE KEYNOTE

Not to make a big thing of it, but the next morning at the Seybold opening keynote address I am impressed by Steve Job's presentation on the new G4s and Cinema Screen Display. Spielberg must have written the script, which might explain why the noted professor Ludwig Pipick, in charge of the SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) Project, is there to demonstrate how much more quickly the new G4s can scan the heavens and still find nothing.

Back to business. OS9 appears to have some especially unique capabilities, such as being able to use a voice print as a password for the system. This is designed to enhance security and make it difficult for someone else to access your personal data. Depending on who logs on, users get a unique desktop configured to their preferences.

Because it's so-o-o sexy, everyone will install this option. Then they'll quickly discard it when their voice goes hoarse with their first bout of flu. Fortunately there's a place to put in a manual code to override the voice recognition software.

And the changes to Sherlock! Now you can search for anything you want. Hot buttons connect you to entertain-



OS9 has some unique capabilities, such as being able to use a voice print as a password for the system.



No matter. I'm headed for the promised land!

THERE'S ALWAYS A TAXI RIDE

The flight lands okay — check. Baggage okay — check, check. Taxi to hotel — meter is broken and the fare is \$30. No questions asked.

The hotel messes up the reservation. They put us in a less than satisfactory room, the aesthetics of which reflect the long history of the Maxwell Hotel. In vain we beseech the clerk for a better room.

All seems lost until my keen-eyed roommate finds the hotel's name misspelled on the city map (which has been handed out since the last earthquake). At the front desk they are embarrassed but grateful. The next day we're moved to more suitable accommodations.

Sunday is the day for planning strategy. We squander it completely but cap it off with a first-rate meal at Morton's Steak House. I've seen Kung Fu movies where they tear the



ment, shopping, and a whole new way to spend gobs of money over the Internet. Hey, Steve! I live with my wife, monster-in-law, and two daughters, all genetically programmed to shop. OS9 with its 10-user license to shop will never see the light of day at my place.

Meanwhile, I can't help but notice that the proportions of Apple's new Cinema Screen are identical to a flattened Rice-A-Roni box.

ON TO THE SHOW FLOOR

ArtQuest. I'd heard of ArtQuest International but it took a trip to San Fran to discover their interesting approach to designing a prepress workflow.

This workflow takes a single page-based approach. Processing PostScript or PDFs as individual pages, ArtQuest's GateIT RIP generates TIFF/IT files conforming to ISO 12639. Each single letter-sized page produces a 40MB file. A proxy is generated and then used for imposition, keeping file overhead down. Lossless compression reduces the file size to 10MB.

It's basically OPI for whole pages, with the high resolution data residing on the Crescendo server and low res preview data the only contribution to network traffic. Hot folders mounted on networked PCs or Macs drive the process, and the operator, by moving the working file's icon from folder to folder on the server, initiates each step. The job progresses from ripping and proofing to imposition. There are no fancy interfaces.

Although the file has been ripped, no screening is applied until imaging. Those duties are performed by the Crescendo TIFF box, a dedicated workstation which screens the job at final resolution and applies any necessary color correction profiles. Having resolution-independent files makes it possible to output the same data to multiple devices at various resolutions, without downsampling in the traditional sense. Proof samples I saw seemed to back up their statements and appeared superior to many others I've seen.

It's even possible to split the workflow, placing the RIP and server at the client's site and forwarding hi-res data by dedicated line to a remote printer's Crescendo TIFF box where final screening is applied and plates imaged.

While my bias is toward PDF workflows, I can see the appeal of the raster approach. If the PS or PDF file successfully rips the first time, the balance of the workflow is bulletproof. You can get more information on ArtQuest by calling 450-967-7878.

ALPS. How should I react to the ALPS MD-5000, printing at 2400 dpi but still using an antiquated ribbon system? The claim: archival quality output, dye sublimation and ink-based imaging plus gold and silver foil inks — and on top of that, it prints opaque white!

Somehow the tight specs and the visuals just don't reconcile easily. Oh, I don't mean the output — which is very slick — but the printer itself! It's plastic, about 18"x12"x8", grey monotone with two contrasting buttons on the top. Open the front panel and there's a series of drawers that look capable of holding eight ribbon cartridges (but there are only seven to be seen). It seems that the printer shuffles the ribbons around in order to queue up the required color for the next pass through the printer, one color per pass. So that sheet of paper seesaws back and forth quite a few times when presented with a complex page.

Print area is 8.23 x 13", 2400 dpi in photo quality mode and 1200 dpi in photorealistic. An undercoat ribbon broadens the range of printable surfaces and a finish coat provides a bright gloss. Options include dye sub kit, SCSI (Mac), USB, Adobe PS3, and Pantone color matching. Windows or Mac, but no cables supplied.

There must be designers in the packaging business dying for an efficient way to mock up an aluminum can. I'm going to ask for a long-term test ride on this one. ALPS is at 408-432-6581 or www.alpsusa.com.

TR Systems MicroPress Cluster Printing System. Take four to eight printers, tear out their RIPs, put a PrintLink box on each using an extremely high speed interface to handle the raster data, and crowd them around an NT workstation running MicroPress Version 5.0 and what have you created?

A Frankenstein of a digital press capable of impressive output.

Groups of lower capacity printers are clustered as a single virtual printer whose capacity is the sum of its smaller units. Under the control of the PrintStation Manager the user can control job spooling and printing functions as well as archiving.



Ask for a copy of a 100-page manual from a cluster of four printers and you get twenty-five pages from each, output in the correct order so that collating is nothing more than putting one stack on the next. If one unit malfunctions during the printing, the PrintStation software distributes the balance of the job over the available units and flags the malfunction for attention.

PDF, PostScript, TIFF and PCL files are accepted by network or Internet connection and a single workstation can drive configurations that include B&W, color and wide format printers. Installations requiring more than eight printers use Ethernet to manage up to twelve units.

This is one *smart* idea. It allows a printer to build a custom configuration incrementally as demand grows; and unlike one large printing unit, the failure of a laser printer or two won't bring production to a complete halt.

Capacity, flexibility and redundancy — I liked what I saw. Contact TR Systems at 770-448-9008 and ask for the nearest Canadian distributor, or visit www.trsystems.com.

I vacate the Moscone Centre with a backbreaking bag of handouts, intent on a quiet evening. My buddy phones: "What are you doing for dinner?"

So off we go to Lori's Diner for a meal too large to finish. Then on to the Hyatt for some pool. I realize then that Americans never play snooker (a vastly superior table game played by Canadian children from birth). My plan for an early evening evaporates.

DAY THREE—UNFOLDING DIGITAL IMPOSITION

I don't make the keynote and I don't miss it a bit.

Today is Digital Imposition Day and my goal is to see if there are any new developments of interest.

I take a quick tour of an admittedly narrow range of imposition products. Historically *Preps*, *Presswise* and *InPosition* have dominated the scene but there seem to be developments worth noting from some up-and-comers.

DynaStrip by Dynagram. This Quebec-based company has made significant progress this year after making expansion into the U.S. market a priority. I see Dynagram's digital imposition product, *DynaStrip*, demonstrate impressive flexibility and sophistication. Impositions for multiweb, sheetwork, work and turn, step and repeat, and multiple impositions of multiple jobs over different forms are configured using *DynaFold*, a folding program that allows you to fold your sheet of paper, visually passing the folding sequence back into *DynaStrip*.

In addition, Dynagram announced *Page Pairing* — a hot folder-driven process for autoprocesing PostScript files. As pages arrive at the hot folder, they are automatically placed in the imposition. Imaging to film or plate is triggered by the completion of one or both sides of a form.

You may download a working version of *DynaStrip* from the Dynagram website at www.dynagram.com or call 418-694-2080 for more info.

DK&A InPosition. Not much going on here. This mighty *XPress*-based imposition plug-in was long a personal favourite. Simple and straightforward, there were lots of things you couldn't do easily but for most jobs it was clean and fast, with a wonderful WYSIWYG interface. With *InDesign* looming, this *QuarkXPress* plug-in better find its bearings or it's going to be history. Check www.dka.com to find out what's new.

Impose-X by Cortron. I thought Cortron only made step-and-repeat machines — how little I knew. I take in a demo by David Burkhart but, let's face it, digital page imposition isn't as exciting as it sounds.

Still, I find a couple of things in *Impose-X* that I had never seen before which I think reveals Cortron's roots in the step-and-repeat business. I like the concept of having a page cursor that allows you to drop a page onto the sheet wherever you choose. I like it when the page repeats itself automatically as your cursor is dragged over the area to fill. Doing this with multiple jobs allows a plate to be densely packed without the need to do complex math.

Perhaps I live in a sheltered world but I have never seen an imposition program import DDES2 geometry files and automatically apply a clipping path to an imported EPS file. A job set up in this manner shows the position of the print area and superimposes the dieline to ensure proper placement. These clipping paths can be directly manipu-



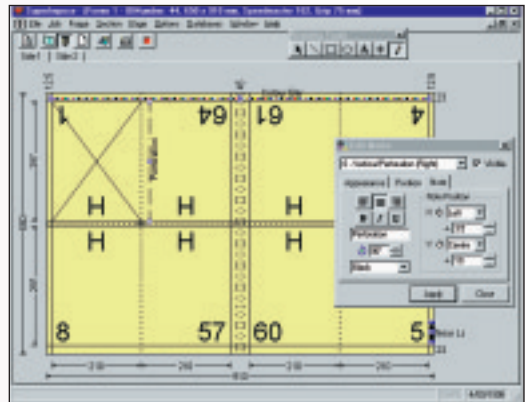
lated in *Impose-X*, allowing changes on the fly to meet production requirements. *Impose-X* will also drive Cortron's step-and-repeat machines. It seems to me that this software combined with a metal plate that can be platesetter-imaged and subsequently exposed in a step-and-repeat machine might make combining digital and analog film a reality. Copydot people should worry — but not today.

Call Cortron at 612-572-1555 or visit www.cortron.com.

SuperImpose by Holt Software. It's not really an imposition program, more of a front end, but its templates export to ScenicSoft *Preps* and everyone else seemed enamoured by it. Brad Wallans of Presource took me on a brief tour.

Basically, *SuperImpose* is imposition planning software. You add your company's specific press and bindery specifications and build templates that are unique to your operation. The software warns you when the template produced is outside your equipment capabilities or produces a job that, for example, can't be guillotined.

Large printers can save a bundle using this package to streamline their job preparation. Call PreSource at 613-821-0629 or point your browser at www.presource.net to get all the details.



SuperImpose by Holt Software. It's not really an imposition program, more of a front end, but its templates export to ScenicSoft *Preps*.

Leica S1 Alpha, Pro and HighSpeed. I confess to being drawn to the Leica booth because I own two model M3s dating back to the 40s. The attraction also had something to do with aesthetics, which seemed sorely lacking when compared to some of Leica's box-like contemporaries.

Available in three models — Alpha, Pro and HighSpeed — the Leica S1's have maximum resolutions of 2570x2570, 5140x5140 and 4000x4000 pixels, generating final file sizes of 38, 152 and 96 MBs respectively, in 48-bit



color. Both Alpha and Pro have a Dmax of 3.3, with the HighSpeed slightly lower at 3.0.

These are scanning cameras; that is, their CCD arrays move during the exposure, so you're limited to still life and studio product work. It takes 75 seconds (Alpha), 185 seconds (Pro) and 18 seconds (HighSpeed) to take a shot — which rules them out for kids' birthday parties.

Unique adapters allow Leica R and M series, Hasselblad and Mamiya 645 Pro lenses to be used. The Novoflex bellows adaptor has full tilt and shift. The cameras use Leica S1 *SilverFast* software tools for scanning, color management and image reproduction. An infrared cutoff filter is necessary and included in the package.

If these digital Leicas hold up like my pair of sixty-year-old M3s (okay, they were serviced twenty years ago) it wouldn't surprise me a bit! Get more information from Kindermann Inc. at 905-940-9262.

ColorControlStation by Color Savvy.

It's not beautiful, it's easily mistaken for a color printer and why did they bother trademarking its name? This device looks and feels like a printer with a measurement device where the print-head should be. I stood and watched the ColorControlStation as its SavvySensor marched its way across the color

target, pausing long enough for spinning flashes of multicolored light to illuminate each patch before advancing to the next.

It has a 50-sheet autofeed paper tray, runs unattended, and provides both density and colorimetric values. Its 4mm Savvysensor takes 2.5 seconds to measure a patch, and short term repeatability is 0.3 deltaEab average. Accuracy is better than 2.5 deltaE*ab average. Interfaces are serial with DB9 and USB with a two-port self-powered hub.

These folks have brought the cost of measuring color down to where it appears to be affordable. Get info on Color Savvy Systems from www.colorsavvy.com or call 513-748-9160.



CoreIDRAW 9. Once upon a time I made a living imaging *CoreIDRAW* files. If the promise of version 9's stability and PostScripting ability is real, then Corel could be putting me out of business today.

Corel pioneered the creative software suite and this Premium Color Edition is nothing less than the kitchen sink of creative suites. In addition to *CoreIDRAW* you get *Photo-Paint 9*, Heidelberg *ColorOpen ICC LE*, Microsoft *Visual Basic* (for scripting), Canto *Cumulus Desktop LE 4.0* for media asset management, Bitstream *Font*

Navigator for font management, a monitor luminance sensor and Agfa's IT-8 scanner target.

Then they toss in a couple of publications on color management from Agfa plus 250 ICC-compliant device profiles and three more minor apps: *Corel Texture*, *Corel Trace* and *Corel Capture*, plus Digimarc Digital watermarking. The CDs contain 25,000 clipart images and 1,000 high-res photos, and to top it off there are 1,000 TrueType and Type 1 fonts.

DRAW offers PDF publishing abilities, including job ticketing and typical output options. There's even a Prepare for Service Bureau feature that takes you step-by-step through gathering up your files for output.

DRAW supports Adobe *Illustrator AI* and EPS files, and can import and edit multi-layered *Photoshop* files, then re-export them as .PSD or MetaCreations *Painter* RIFF files.

Gotta give these people credit for working hard. Check it out at www.corel.com.

Enfocus PitStop. The Enfocus *PitStop* plug in for *Acrobat 4* has brought true editability to the PDF world. This tool

INKJET PROOFING SYSTEM

Imation

www.imation.com

list price System \$2994 (US) RIP software \$995

New Matchprint two-page proofing system for creative market drives HP DesignJet ColorPro GA

Imation debuted its Matchprint Inkjet System for proofing at Seybold, consisting of Imation's new Color RIP software and its Matchprint Inkjet Commercial or Design Base media. The system drives the new HP DesignJet ColorPro GA printer which outputs a full double page spread with bleed.

The Color Rip is being positioned up-market from Adobe's PressReady, but is designed to serve a similar customer. System features include the ability to proof files with up to 12 different color separations, Pantone and ICC color support and fast drying consumables. Imation says it offers a number of features beyond those in PressReady, including user-definable custom colors, the ability to recombine color separations, support for seven file formats (vs. three for PressReady) and Imation's own color-management module, which the company claims is better than others on the market.



The integrated HP/Imation Matchprint Inkjet System includes a starter kit of ten sheets of Imation Matchprint Inkjet media. Systems are scheduled to begin shipping in October.



has been integrated into everyone's workflow, including Agfa's Apogee Pilot and Heidelberg-Creo's Prinergy.

This remarkable suite of tools allows for complete manipulation of graphics and text in PDFs, including global search and replace on colors or item characteristics, text editing, and font embedding. It is now possible to edit and replace TIFF and EPS image and graphic files in the PDF by double clicking on the item you wish to edit, whereupon either *Photoshop* or *Illustrator* opens a temporary work file. After editing is complete, closing the temp file returns the changed objects or images to the PDF. The changes are permanent when saved.

You can download a demo version from the Enfocus site at www.enfocus.com.

Lantana Crackerjack. I've used *Crackerjack* with *Acrobat 3* and consider it the perfect complement to *PitStop*. But when I had a look at *Crackerjack 3* for *Acrobat 4*, I was impressed with the many improvements to its interface. It allows composite and separated output of PDF files directly from within *Acrobat 4*. It offers control over dot shape, and has standard and user-se-

lectable screen angles for CMYK and spot colors. It manages asymmetric scaling (good for those in the flexo business) and all the stuff that prepress people never got from Adobe.

Although in the long run, I think *Crackerjack* will be accepted and used industry-wide, that day won't come until a native PDF imposition program gains general acceptance. There is no sense in being able to output single pages from *Acrobat 4* to the larger devices available today. Mind you, if Quite Imposing's imposition plug-in for *Acrobat* ever becomes useful, Lantana's *Crackerjack* will undoubtedly become a key element in my generic PDF workflow.

In Canada, you can contact Ernest Green & Son at 905-629-8999 or visit Lantana at www.lantanarips.com (telephone 510-744-0282).



THE FINAL LESSON

San Francisco is beautiful in many respects — but I found it an odd fact of life that nowhere can you get a serving of Rice-A-Roni.

On the flight home I made the mistake of asking for a pillow. None was to be found. Offered an unwrapped blanket, I emphatically declined — which taught me another valuable lesson. Never give an airline attendant a hard time about a pillow before dinner is served.

With a slight smile she asked, "Chicken or beef?" "Beef," I replied. Squatting down, she stretched to reach for the one dinner whose foil cover had been displaced very early in the flight, smiling fiendishly as she said, "This one's for you!"

Believe me when I say a Rice-A-Roni box would have been easier to swallow. *

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3D MODELING AND ANIMATION SOFTWARE

MetaCreations suite of 3D apps to revolve around new Carrara software

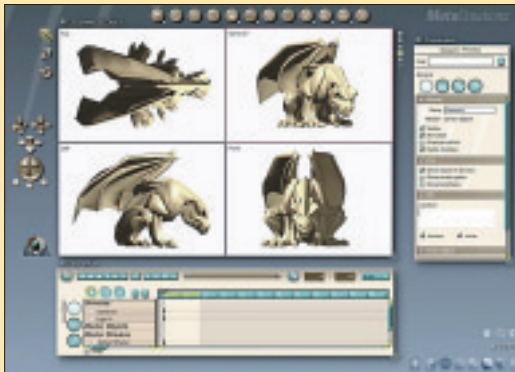
MetaCreations
800-846-0111

www.metacreations.com

MetaCreations has announced the release this fall of Carrara 1.0, a 3D modeling and animation solution for print, video and the web which replaces Ray Dream and Infini-D and will become a key component in MetaCreations' family of 3D products.

Major features include:

- a new user interface called SmartFlow, an intuitive, progressive interface environment that will allow users to walk projects through a series of production steps and introduces a "room" concept, each room featuring interface items needed to complete a task such as modeling, texturing, rendering, etc.
- a high-speed Hybrid Renderer



- MetaStream support which lets users create fully textured objects and export them as MetaStream objects
- direct manipulation, texturing and modeling of 3D objects in real time using hardware acceleration; without 3D hardware MetaCreations' SreeD rendering technology will allow display of highly complex scenes in real time using software acceleration
- import and export support for 2D files: GIF, JPEG, TIFF, PICT (Mac), PCX (Win), BMP (Win), Photoshop, Corel PhotoPaint (Win), Targa TGA (Win), Illustrator, TrueType fonts, QuickTime, AVI, Sequenced Image Output (for all 2D file types); 3D files: DXF, OBJ, 3DS (Win), RDS (import only), MetaStream (export only), VRML 2 (export only)
- hundreds of 3D clipart objects
- hundreds of shaders, camera presets, light source presets, and special FX presets
- API based on a fully object-oriented and mature source code; the SDK (to be available on the MetaCreations web site) will contain all documentation, headers, examples and tools to build any kind of Carrara plug-in for Mac or Windows environments

Minimum system requirements for Windows are Pentium II 300Mhz and 64 MB RAM (3D graphics accelerator card recommended); for Power Macintosh, G3 266Mhz, System 8.1 and 64 MB of RAM (3D graphics accelerator card recommended).