

product review:

by Brad Herring

Have you heard of the company known as 'Renewed Vision'? If you haven't, expect them to be on your radar screen soon. Born out of churches such as North Point Community Church in Atlanta, these guys are looking for ways to use software to communicate God's love. Using the big church environment as their testing grounds, they create products that will help churches of all sizes.

Recently I had the chance to test drive one of their newest releases, ProVideoPlayer. A quick summation -- WOW!

ProVideoPlayer (PVP) allows churches the ability to control video backgrounds on the fly with as many spanning screens as you desire! This product is competing with the likes of Video Canvas (Edirol), but with seemingly more features and less money.

PVP uses Apple technology for its computing power. By doing this, they are bringing powerful projection to the church at unheard of prices. If you are controlling a single video feed (ie, maybe 2 projection screens, but both screens showing the same image) you can be in a PVP system for about \$699 (standard def) plus the cost of an iMac computer. So, for under \$2,000US, you can be creating and presenting amazing video that will enhance worship and give a huge visual punch to concerts.

Video is now becoming a creative art in our worship services that is akin to lighting. Much like lighting sets the tone and mood, now so does video. With the advent of tools such as PVP, you can now manipulate images and video to tell a story -- after all, it is true what they say: a picture is worth a a thousand words.

PVP is currently running version 1.1.4, released on April 18, 2006. The guys at Renewed Vision recommend it be used with a programmable video card (that they tell me is standard on all new Mac computers) that use CoreImage (which requires Mac OSX 10.4 or higher). The company indicates that the iMac (\$999) and MacBook (\$1,099) are ideal for this application and that the Mac mini (Intel Core Duo - \$599) is perfect for additional network nodes.

One of the exciting features is the ease of adding content. Like any Mac, you simply drag and drop media onto PVP - importing it from a local or network drive, CD, DVD, or thumb drive to each computer in your array. Further, ProVideoPlayer is based on the QuickTime architecture, so it can play any content that QuickTime can play. This adds a huge value right off the bat.

Playing a video (or still images) on the screen is as simple as clicking on a thumbnail icon. The software works a lot like iTunes and other similar software in that you have a primary library, from which you create playlists. In these





RENEWED VISION'S Pro Video Player

Shown here a 9 by 3 plasma array using ProVideo Player at Bigstuf camps



Shown here using three projection screens for a high impact concert

playlists you can modify the clip (color, speed, direction, etc) without affecting the original clip in the library! This is huge. Now you can tailor speeds and colors for consistency as many times as you wish, and with a simple click of the mouse all of your work is on the screen! You can also adjust your playlists so that multiple screens can display multiple images at once (assuming you have a computer for each screen).

So far, Renewed Vision has tested this system with up to 20 computers connected to a “master” controller machine, but state there should be no end to the number of computers you could use for multi-screen presentations. Your expansion is limited only by creativity and budget.

PVP will tile or cascade the image, and automatically scale as well! With it’s ‘Grid Mapping’ mode, you simply tell the computer which screen it is displaying content for. This feature allows the image to stretch across all the screens in your array (something they refer to as ‘big picture’). Talk about a stunning effect! It’s also worthy to note that PVP will ‘squash’ the image to fit vertically or horizontally. Obviously if you custom create footage to the aspect ratio you present, this is not a concern. Actually, with the rendering algorithms used by PVP, I thought it did a very nice job of making standard video fit on the ‘big picture’ screen. The end result looked very good - even with content intended for a larger aspect ratio. A tremendous bonus provided by Grid Mapping is the vast amount of post-production time saved. Gone are the hours (and days) of stretching clips across a virtual, multi-screen canvas in After Effects, cutting them up, and loading them on each machine accordingly. PVP does all this for you, non-destructively, with a few simple settings and a click of a button without creating new versions of your content.

While I mentioned earlier that you could build playlists that allow you to pre-program effects, it’s important to note that you can also make these changes happen in real time. Simply click on the speed bar or grab the hue changer and whalla! The effects happen real time right before your eyes.

Now, obviously this software package is Mac-only. Sorry, but there are no versions for it available to the PC world. An entry level Standard-Definition one-seat license starts at \$699 at the time of this article. A High-Definition version

is also available for \$999. Each computer must have a valid license, and additional licenses for slaved network nodes are available for \$499 each.

The current version does not support edge-blending from within the software, but it is a feature they are looking into for future releases. Support for SDI , HD/SDI, and FireWire output as well as midi remote cueing are available. This version will also allow your video clip to be played forwards or backwards, or do a ‘ping-pong’ effect where it plays to the end then plays in reverse back to the front, and repeats this pattern (also known as Palindrome).

Transitions can be pre-programmed or ran manually on a virtual T-bar. This will allow you to transition to a certain point and stop, vary the speed, or simply time clip transitions on the fly.

The software was very intuitive, but it does include a built in manual should you need help. With larger systems, Renewed Vision also offers consulting that can include training on the system or installation. Setting up a multi-screen network can be a little tricky, but once you have each computer configured, the software is a snap to use. Volunteers could easily run it, but like all products in this category it is limited to the creativity of the user. This is not something you want to set your Electrical Engineer behind - if you want incredible results, tend to lean more towards a musician or artist as your primary operator.

If you are looking for a way to create a dynamic worship environment you will definitely want to look into the ProVideoPlayer software. It will add an entirely new dimension to worship, concerts, and productions. This is a great value for the money.

If you’d like more information on this product, visit: www.renewedvision.com ◆

Brad Herring operates Church Production Resources, Inc. a ministry designed to equip the worship technicians and worship leaders with the skills needed to use media and arts to further the Gospel message. For additional training resources, articles, and product reviews visit www.Church-ProductionResources.com