



Real People Reviews

by Daniel M. East

Product: FlipAlbum Pro 3

Manufacturer/Vendor/Developer: E-Book Systems

MSRP: 129.99

Street price: 99.99

Review date: 31 January 2004

DESCRIPTION (What's it do? What's it got?): A 3D virtual presentation program that created the appearance of an actual book complete with page turning sound and table of contents.

MIN. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: OS 10.1.3 or higher, G3 450 or better, 256 Mb RAM or better, 35 Mb free disk space (although they recommend about twice that for optimum results)

FlipAlbum Pro 3 is a 3D virtual presentation program that created the appearance of an actual book -- complete with page turning, sound and table of contents -- but there are too many hurdles to clear.

LIKES: The interface is clean and uses icons that are simple to understand. The content the user provides is simple and you only need to pick the folder of images you wish to employ -- FlipAlbum Pro 3 takes it from there. You can easily customize background music, themes and text as well as a built in CD burn tool so that your finished album can be burned in a few clicks of the mouse. There are some great forums for end users and even third party themes to add to this application. E-Book also offers volumes of additional enhancements.

DISLIKES: Each aspect of the functions (viewer, creator, burner) is a separate application and I had at least three crashes from each during testing. Additionally, once you add a cover graphic or image, there is no apparent way to change or remove it. Another real issue I have is that you can only finalize your project as a burned CD. It would be great to export to full sized DV output or QuickTime slide show or to have this all work with iLife apps. What about just creating a disk image? The transitions are not nearly as smooth or fluid in movement as they should be. If these features are within this application, they are not apparent and these problems make the use seem

disjointed from what is marketed to be otherwise. My main concern with this application is that once you do burn the final CD, the contents do not give the user any indication of what the launch icon is. It would be great to see this application recognize the platform of the computer it is loading on and use README files or title the launch file more appropriately. In addition, there is no support for AAC audio. Not good. Finally, "buyer beware," the theme packs that you can order are nearly as costly as the application, itself.

There are a quite a few slide show options and other tools out there that serve similar purposes, and for my money, I feel that most people would be better off using Apple's Keynote. While it wouldn't give you a contents page without manual creation and some of the "clickability" of FlipAlbum Pro 3, you could view your output on nearly any computer using QuickTime. For that matter, you could just place your images into iPhoto, then iMovie and use some third party plug ins and iDVD to create something that could just run almost anywhere.

FINAL THOUGHTS: This is a nice idea that seems so well executed by their marketing and promotion; however, it's truly disappointing when you begin using it. I wanted to like FlipAlbum Pro 3 and I hope that upcoming versions make usability easier and offer better input/output options. My two cents? Stick to Keynote or iLife until further notice.

TEST SYSTEM: Apple Titanium PowerBook G4 500 - 1 GB RAM - 10.3.2

OVERALL RATING: 2 out of 5 Stars = FAIR

For more information, visit: <http://www.flipalbum.com>

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