



KICKING THE TIRES

by Frank Petrie



Review

Product: **SightLight**

Company: Griffin Technology

<<http://www.griffintechnology.com/products/sightlight/>>

Requirements: OS X and an iSight

Price: (US) \$39.99

Test Rig: iBook G4/933/640 MB RAM; OS X.3.3; iChat A/V v1.2

Review Date: 02 April 2004

iSight. Apple has brought video conferencing to the rest of us. But video is a tricky thing. When iChat A/V first came out, it was obviously a work in progress. There were obvious problems with color and the handling of low light conditions. Minor troubles when you think of what they were trying to do and what they had accomplished for their first step, but hiccups that had to be addressed all the same.

So, with the release of iChat A/V v1.2 white balance was corrected so that your face no longer had a green cast in low light environments. But still, the uploaded video looked far better with solid light source(s). So, here comes Griffin of iMic and iTrip fame to tackle the problem.

"With the incredible iSight FireWire camera from Apple you look good. With the SightLight on your iSight you look better. The Griffin SightLight slips right over the iSight, shares its FireWire cable connection and adds a warm glow of light that improves your onscreen iChat appearance."

Now, having majored in college in video production, I was tempted to put my knowledge to work by rigging up some kind of homemade 3-point lighting rig. But seeing as they use this same kind of lighting now for many portraits and close-ups (not too mention forensic photography – but I just did, didn't I), plus as I didn't want to burn down the houses on my block, I thought it best to give this a go first.

THE GOOD

Operation is plain and simple. SightLight has three settings – Auto, Off and On. When set to Auto, it will automatically sense the amount of ambient room light and adjust its output accordingly, just the same as the keyboards on the higher end PowerBooks. This means more light for darker rooms and less light for brighter environments without you performing a single adjustment. And when not in use, just turn it to the – surprise! – Off setting. The On setting puts the SightLight to full power. (You won't get a tan or anything but those in need of Rogaine may want to powder the shine.)

But I don't want any more cables on my desk! Not to worry. SightLight shares iSight's incoming FireWire cable. First you connect your FireWire cable to the SightLight's female FireWire jack and then connect its external FireWire cable to your iSight. Il est juste que simple! (What's that mean? Use Sherlock.)

THE BAD

The packaging, while effectively mirroring the look of iSight's packaging, was a bit of a pain to open. The sleeve (at least on mine) was impossible to remove from the box containing the SightLight. A bit disappointing, sort of like being a kid and not being able to tear off the paper of your Christmas present. The directions also mirror the Apple look. Unfortunately, they don't have any diagrams like in the Apple instructions. (Remember, I am a bit dim and respond better to pictures.) So, it'll take you a few extra minutes to assemble.

As far as operation, the color temperature is set for outdoor, it would seem. Therefore, it will give you a slight blue tint. Also, the light is not very strong; you

have to be within two feet of your SightLight for it to be effective. And the further you move away the quicker the illumination drops off (and it drops off VERY, VERY quickly). It works better with a second light source doing the 'heavy lifting', while letting SightLight fill in the shadows.

THE UGLY

After about one hour of use, the unit is too hot to even touch. You have to wonder what effect this will have on your iSight's electronics after a period of time.

.

THE CLOSE

Griffin Technology's SightLight is functionally sound and equally as cool looking as your iSight itself. And the SightLight will enable you to be more fully lit ... somewhat.

I have to admit to my disappointment at its performance or lack thereof. I can't recommend this as a primary light source, it's just too weak. But it does fill in the shadows, so long as you remain close to the SightLight itself, it can be used as part of your lighting.

Whether or not it is worth purchasing, I would definitely recommend that you find someone who has one and try it first, before you part with the cash.

=====

©2004 Frank Petrie, Technologies & Products Specialist
The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs)
Member, The Apple Groups Team (TAGteam)

<http://www.mamugs.org>

Email: phranky@mamugs.com

iChat: phranky

Providing camaraderie, cooperative programs, events, training and knowledge sharing for Apple/Macintosh User Groups free of charge.

The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs) employs anti-virus protection, however, given that messages and/or attachments can be altered, modified and/or fabricated by outside parties, we cannot guarantee that any communications are "virus-free." We recommend testing any e-mail, attachment, image and/or other types of messages prior to opening and/or viewing.

ATTRIBUTION INFORMATION: This article may be reprinted by any Macintosh User Group in their newsletter/publication distributed on paper or online, so long as credit is given to the author and publisher (Frank Petrie, MaMUGs/Mid-Atlantic Users Group Team). Commercial or other publication is prohibited unless specific permission is granted by the author. Please notify author of placement and provide a copy/URL for reference. All trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Thank you.