

ProShow Gold 3.0

The gold standard just got better

ProShow Gold has long been the, umm, gold standard for wedding, portrait, and studio photographers who want to show work to clients on a DVD, and we can see why. With its smooth user interface and dizzying number of effects and customizations, ProShow Gold instantly became our favorite slide-show program.

Version 3.0 is quite a major update from 2.6, and one of the key changes is right up our alley: multicore support. On a dual-core machine, we saw both cores operating at 100 percent—just the way they should be. After all, if you paid for the hardware, you should be able to wring every bit of performance out of it. Also new is the ability to output your video to Adobe Flash format, QuickTime, Windows Media, or HD-resolution AVI files.

When testing ProShow Gold 3.0 we created a high-quality first-pass photo slide show within an hour. The UI is easy to use, but not quite as simple as our previous fave, CodeJam's MemoriesOnTV 3.0. It isn't that ProShow is particularly difficult to use, it's that the sheer number of options, switches, and sliders available can overwhelm a newbie. For example, MemoriesOnTV 3.0 features several pre-canned multislide effects that you can apply in a few seconds. Achieving the same effects in ProShow Gold 3.0 takes quite a bit of tinkering. The same tinkering, however, gives you much more nuanced control over your final product. And while there are a few things you can do in MOTV 3.0 that you can't do in ProShow Gold 3.0, ProShow Gold does many more things better.

So what's there to complain about? We have a few minor UI quibbles: You should be able to screw around with a slide and click Cancel if you don't want to commit to a change. As it is now, your actions are applied as you experiment.



The layers in ProShow Gold 3.0 are powerful, but the number of options can be overwhelming.

You can perform a simple undo, but we'd rather just be able to click Cancel. Adding a second audio stream for narration is clumsy, but removing the narration is even clumsier. Regardless, we're really just digging for problems because overall this is our new favorite slide-show app.

—GORDON MAH UNG

PROSHOW GOLD 3.0

\$70, www.photodex.com



Memeo AutoBackup

Baby got back(up), barely

At first glance, Memeo's AutoBackup reminds us of the delicious pairing of Mr. Jack Daniels with Ms. Coca-Cola—if Jack were a backup utility and Coke were automation.

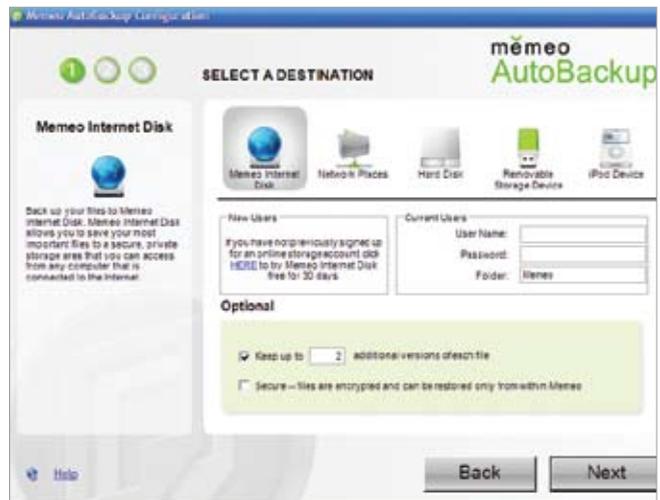
On paper, this program presents the perfect solution for those of us who often forget to run a weekly backup of that-which-is-mission-critical on our hard drives. In practice, however, the cocktail's a little watery. AutoBackup performs adequately enough to keep us buzzed but contains enough annoyances to keep us shy of outright drunken enthusiasm.

The program's simple to use. You first select where you want your files backed up—locations from a Memeo-provided Internet storage account to a network drive to an iPod are supported. You then select the file types (or folders) you want Memeo to watch, and the program will automatically sync your new, deleted, and changed files with said backup device—all without you ever having to touch the program again. Sounds great, right?

While it works in the end, AutoBackup takes a ton of setup time: The program has to pore over your drive, assemble the files for backup, verify the files being backed up, etc. Even on a fairly slimmed-down machine, this was a process measurable in hours, not minutes.

AutoBackup's Restore feature is fairly perplexing in that the program won't overwrite old material at your backup location until it's crammed to the brim with files. So when you restore some lost data saved on your 20GB iPod, you'll have to dig through 20GB of files, which almost certainly includes a bunch of stuff you don't necessarily want to restore as part of a batch operation.

The program also has some issues working with USB devices, especially



This program gives you a ton of places to stash your stuff.

ones that power down after a certain period of nonuse. We frequently received a "pending" message, which indicated that AutoBackup was waiting for our external drive to become available... even though the drive was completely accessible in Windows Explorer. Ce qui?

These little drops of programming poison sour an otherwise worthy selection. The drink isn't ruined; we're just hesitant to order it.

—DAVID MURPHY

MEMEO AUTOBACKUP

\$30, www.memeo.com

