

iLife 06 Review Part 1: Introduction, iPhoto and iWeb Daniel Ross

With Apple's recent release of iLife 06 at MacWorld 2006 its amazing to see how far the iLife suite of programs has evolved since its first version over 3 years ago. It seems every year Apple adds a new must have feature or program this year is no exception. Apple has continued with its strategy of charging \$79.00 each year for gaining access to these new features and applications that many die-hard hard fans have flocked to purchase. On the other hand many have felt that for being loyal customers Apple should provide some form of price break for upgrading each year and thus many have waited to even upgrade previous versions of iLife apps due to the continued cost to keep up with Steve's programmers at Apple. In the box users will find 1 DVD with everything from the suite included on it no longer is Apple shipping iLife with a CD of iPhoto, iMovie, iTunes etc so keep this in mind when considering the upgrade (No word yet on a trade in program to get CD's with the other applications on them). So should you purchase iLife 06? Should you sign up for a .Mac account that is desired by some applications to use some of its one-click features? What requirements will you need to use iLife 06 as well as many other questions will be answered in my review. I will take an in depth look at each application except iTunes which most users know how it functions with the other applications in the suite. We will also cover the Pro's and Con's of each app and what things have changed for the better or worse.

iWeb 1.0.1

So why not jump into this by starting off with the newest member of the family in iLife 06. iWeb is Apple's first jump into the website creation world as a stand alone app. Previous web creation tools were limited to using iPhoto's publish to .Mac feature and or an Export to website feature in iPhoto (more on these later). iWeb is pretty much layed out like its other family members. iWeb's layout is very similar to that of iTunes and iPhoto with your "Site Organizer" representing your website and every level of it. This look is very similar to iTune's playlist view or iPhotos's source list with your photos albums. The main work area of iWeb is just to the right of this "site organizer" and allows you to view any of your pages in its window. Depending on what type of page you are looking at: Blog, Video, Photo Gallery, Podcast, General information page different options are available to you more on these in a moment. At the bottom of the interface is a menu of options such as a text field option, Shapes, image/object placement behind or in front of other objects, a Masking Tool, then standard buttons such as a Media Browser, image editor, an Inspector Panel, Color and finally a font interface that are somewhat identical to Keynote and Pages. Apple has borrowed a lot of iWebs basic interface features from the iWork suite so many current iWork users should feel at home with each of these interfaces we will cover a few later on for those that might not be as familiar with them. Now to start off I should mention that iWeb is directly aimed at users that want an easy way to publish photos and video as well as Podcasts on the web to share with the world or just family using password protection this is not an advanced HTML

editor. I should mention also that iWeb is heavily tied into Apple's .Mac service and offers one-click publishing directly to your account with folder and site indexing. Some non .Mac users may run into some difficulties publishing content as iWeb does not offer FTP or any other form of publishing to non .Mac servers for hosting.

Now to creation of pages, Apple as usual has amazed iWeb users with a ton of built in templates that are ready for users to fill in the blanks with there content all the layout and text for each site. Users can select from 12 Themes each with 6 templates of pages you can select from. After a user has selected a theme the site organizer will represent which page you are working with in your site. The main editing window is pretty straght forward and most users will not have to much trouble interacting with it. This is a far cry from working with homepage builder on the .Mac site, which wasn't as flexible as iWeb. Most .Mac pages didn't offer many of the features that iWeb does such as having some of the text flow around photos or angles on pages or even behind or in front of photos. Another great feature is the pre done pages for Video and Photos and even podcasts and blogs. Basically users can select a page designed for Video and the entire layout has been setup all you need to do is drag and drop a video via the Media viewer or from the desktop. Most pages can be modified to whatever the end users wants using the object's interaction points to rotate or even resize whatever they would like on the screen. Some parts of the pre done pages cannot be adjusted however, which is a disappointment due to the fact that after a while some pages can look stale and repetitive however most basic users should not mind as you can add content anywhere on the page and change the look in that respect. The inspector panel is a helpful tool and can help modify pages very quickly as well as add any effects to photos such as drop shadows, reflections to the bottom of photos. One of the major features of the inspector panel allows you to add passwords to protect your entire site and if you use .Mac publish directly to a .Mac Group page. As for adding some content to your page using multiple layers and text on photos one of the con's thus far that many early users have noticed is some text and complex portions of iWeb sites are turned into graphics instead of text or compressed. .jpg's. iWeb uses .png which is not as compressed as the .jpg standard and can make many sites size jump considerably and make load times a little slower on dial up or some broadband connections. As for adding audio and video you will need to first create content in either Garageband, iMovie, iPhoto first as iWeb does not have any on the fly Movie or Podcasting abilities in it. When you do have a podcast page setup you can choose to publish it directly to iTunes with very little effort or know how. You can also establish if its content is not suitable for those listeners under the age of 17. The blogging feature in iWeb helps you keep all of your posts organized in a drop down interface in the main window which is nice feature as you can create content and the main blog page as well as your site will automatically adjust as you add more blog entries this goes the same for podcasts and video content as well. RSS feeds are automatically created for each page you make and can be read in most RSS viewers without much trouble.

In the end most 1.0 products don't have everything perfected the first time even if its from Apple and with any pro' and con's with any program iWeb has a few of both. The lack of a built in FTP might be a definite sore spot for many non .Mac users. Another gripe some may have a problem with if they are a multi-mac user is that you cannot edit an iWeb page or site from more than one computer, This is primarily due to the size of the iWeb sites created they are very large so making it very difficult to migrate the data

between more than one machine. Apple has posted a Knowledge Base article about this and how to switch to another Mac for iWeb editing, (However I do hope that apple offers some form of multi-mac editing in a future version of iWeb through some form of syncing via .Mac or another means). One of the other things I have noticed about iWeb is that you have to use iWeb or another HTML editor to modify changes to any page as opposed to being able to upload and edit on the former .Mac Homepage Builder, some parts i.e. .Mac visit counters and some slideshow features of iWeb pages may not work in other HTML editors due to the fact that some of the features are dependent on a .Mac account and or having iPhoto to fully take advantage of them in the way Apple designed them (another reason why Apple wants everyone to have a .Mac account and a Mac to go with it). However with some of these things in mind most beginner users and users looking for a very easy and quick way to publish content onto .Mac or using another internet service will find iWeb very quick to use although uploading a entire site with video and photos can take some time I would advise making sure you either upload a page at a time or have some time set aside to wait while the pages upload as you cannot cancel this once it has started (unless you force quit iWeb). In the end iWeb is a great start to publish content online with very little html or knowledge of site creation users can quickly post blogs online and share podcasts with the world via the iTunes music store. For advanced users this is not the HTML editor you were looking for to replace your favorite HTML editing program. I look forward to seeing where Apple takes this program.

iPhoto 6.0.1

One of the Applications I have been looking forward to seeing a new update to is iPhoto. iPhoto '05 was a huge upgrade from previous versions that were extremely slow and not extremely user friendly. iPhoto '06 doesn't change much of the improved features of the '05 version it just adds more features some of which we will explore. One feature Apple is heavily promoting is the fact that iPhoto can now do full screen editing that almost looks and looks like apertures interface. This is a HUGE feature in my opinion as now I can edit photos in a very clean and simple interface with minimal interruptions from the rest of the iPhoto interface. Another added feature is Photocasting which can be used to broadcast your photos across the internet to other iPhoto users on Macs and RSS readers on the PC platform I will go in-depth into this feature later. Also Apple has added more output options than ever such as Calendars and Greeting cards and iWeb publishing in addition to those options you can now truly print borderless prints on printers that support this option. Also Apple has expanded its support of RAW cameras somewhat as well as long as you are using 10.4.4 or later this is a popular format for some digital photographers.

So lets take a look at full screen editing. iPhoto's previous editing method was located in the main viewer window itself when you double clicked on an image or if you used another 3rd-party application like Adobe Elements. Now users can opt still to use a 3rd party editing program just like before but Apple has stepped up its own interface or should I say lack thereof. Simply put iPhoto now opens your photo(s) (you can have up to

8 in the full screen edit mode) in an all black background environment. Where are the tools you ask? Well if you move your cursor to either the top of the screen or the bottom the Photo Selection palette or Tools interface slide up and down out of the screen. I think this was the perfect solution to where to put the tools as before they were always up in previous versions. This allows the end user to have a full un-obstructed view of the photo and depending on the screen you are working with in some cases you can have a VERY large canvas to work with. All of the same editing tools are still available as are 9 New options for your photos that can be “layered” to some degree such as vignette, fade color, edge blur and so on. If you click more than once on any of these effects it will continue to add more of an effect until you have covered the entire photo. One draw back is that you don’t have much control over the where and how much portions of each effect nor just removing one without having to undo all the others (I think this will be addressed in future versions). You can crop and do all the same editing features as before with no real change to the interface and how it’s accomplished. I think Apple added the perfect touch to everything with the editing features of iPhoto ’06.

As for other new additions to iPhoto, photocasting may not be the next big thing for the internet like podcasting is right now but for iPhoto ’06 users it might be the perfect solution to sharing photos with family and friends remotely without having to send one e-mail or resize or zip anything. Photocasting is a new concept introduced at MacWorld by Steve Jobs to share photos directly to another iPhoto user now you may think to yourself iPhoto already does something like this. This is true if you’re on the same network as another iPhoto user using Bonjour (iTunes also offers a similar feature for music streaming). Photocasting sends its information via .Mac to any iPhoto ’06 user via e-mail and or a direct web link via iWeb. Think of this as a remote photo album that you can instantly update on the fly and on the other end users computer will be updated once they are reconnected to the Internet. Now heres the catch #1 it’s a .Mac member only feature to make a Photocast #2 you have to use iPhoto ’06 in order to use it (i.e. Create and or View directly in iPhoto ‘06) #3 PC users can view the content but its an RSS feed page and not something you can sync with any other program as of the time of this review and Lastly #4 Non .Mac users can view any Photocast you have to be a .Mac member if you want to publish ONLY.

As for new print output options you have 2 new ones to compliment the already existing and upgraded options from previous versions. Calendars and Greeting cards, Pretty much self explained but of course with a bit of flare added in from Apple’s designers. With calendars you can have up to as many as 24 months on one calendar. I put one together (12 months) in about 5 minutes using the Picture calendar theme I selected some photos from my library and used the “Autoflow” feature to move them into various spots on the calendar this saved me some time of figuring out if some would look better than others in some spots when I didn’t like one I simply moved it where I wanted it and it changed. I ordered it and after about a week had an express mail box waiting for me inside of it was a high quality folder with the Apple logo on it and inside of it was a plastic shrink wrapped 12 month calendar and my shipping slip. I was needless to say impressed as to the quality and look of the calendar. I had ordered photo books and prints from iPhoto before and was worried that this may not turn out as well since most pages

are double sided (possibly why it takes a bit to print most calendars) but it looked great just like everything else. You can also do what I did and add photos on certain dates and add text accordingly. Greeting cards are a bit easier than calendars for production time currently you can only have 1 photo on the cover and basic text on the back and inside, however with some outside of iPhoto editing I'm sure you can change this for the photo on front. Some can be just postcard style and others can open up and include envelopes for sending to family and friends. I have yet to print or order any greeting cards but I think its great that you can if you want print either of these on your own printer as opposed to being only able to order them from iPhoto (envelopes not included if you print at home ☺).

Support for 2 little talked about features one is the fact that you can store photos outside of its sacred iPhoto folder by just deselecting the option that photos are copied to the hard drive in iPhotos advanced properties section. Deselecting this option means that iPhoto will not duplicate photos when importing them into the application, but will leave them in their original files on your computer. When you edit these images in iPhoto, however, the edited versions will be saved in the iPhoto library, not your original files. Your original files remain untouched. This can be a good and bad thing but its something that was not in previous versions. Added as well is more support for more RAW cameras, which a complete list now can be found on the OS X page for camera support or at the following link: <http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=300884>. I should add that if you are using iPhoto '05 or iPhoto '06 that these same cameras will also work with 10.4.3 and 10.4.4 and later.

For now this concludes part 1 of the review of iLife '06 if you have any comments complaints and or corrections feel free to comment or contact me.