



► FotoStation Pro: An Interview

An interview with FotoWare CEO Ole Christian Frenning and Development Manager Anders Bergman

What are the most important improvements in the new version of FotoStation PRO?

Frenning: The new FotoStation PRO is better adapted for individual digital photographers and has a greater value for the user than ever before. Up until now, FotoWare's customers have been corporate organizations. Now, with increased ease of use, additional functionality and reduced pricing, FotoStation PRO is affordable and ready to meet the needs of a larger user base. Buying the new version or upgrading is an even better investment for the end user.

How can the independent photographer take advantage of this value in his or her everyday work?

Frenning: We have brought much of the power of our very popular Color Factory server application to the desktop. It has an extensive choice of "Actions" to automate and streamline time consuming and repetitive tasks. We have re-engineered the application, allowing us to introduce a new level of flexibility for selecting and presenting images combined with a sleek, customizable new interface. It can be adapted to almost any digital workflow you can think of. The application offers more immediate usability right out of the box. While the customizable options are greatly expanded, first-time users will find it much easier to dive into the powerful tools of FotoStation PRO.

FotoStation PRO now gives the typical single user a professional engine to process, acquire, store and retrieve images and other media files. The new FotoStation PRO will be a long wanted update for Mac OS X users.

Why didn't you deliver a version for this environment earlier?

Bergman: Mac OS X is a strong user environment for the professional, but it is an entirely new operating system and programming environment. We chose to wait for the best development platform, not just for this update but also for future versions of FotoStation PRO. Our customers use FotoStation PRO to make their living and depend on first-rate reliability. Mac OS X is reliable. Quickly patching previous versions of our software might have met marketing needs; however, we strive for a higher level of quality. So extensive forward-looking redesign and reengineering seemed the better choice.

In your own opinion, how does FotoStation PRO compare with other archival software in the marketplace?

Frenning: You can archive images with FotoStation PRO. You can also do much more. The real added value lies in its unique workflow organizing power, helping the photographer and artist to speed up labor-intensive tasks. Archiving is the back end of workflow. We chose to do both tasks, and by doing so, do both better.

Unlike many other archival solutions, the new version of FotoStation PRO offers workflow automating tools that make more revenue for the customer. Its new Image Actions provide strong picture enhancement and color management capabilities to achieve better image quality in a more effective way. Our FotoWare Smart® Technology engine actually lets the photographer batch process large numbers of pictures to professional quality standards. Also, the new File Actions allow the busy photographer to perform auto routing of files from image capture to e-mail, Internet delivery and printing tasks. Even so, the archival function has been considerably enhanced. It now features dynamic updates and advanced search and replace tasks greatly improving the speed and manageability of updating metadata. Used as a network client to our Index Manager server software, performing advanced multi-archive search through local and IM archives gives more flexibility than ever.



When you decided to develop the new version of FotoStation PRO, what was the highest priority goal you set out to achieve?

Bergman: That is easy to answer: Flexibility. Our success with FotoWare products taught us what photographers need. Our re-engineered software offers us a much more flexible platform to build in a new level of flexibility for our customers. We wanted to offer better flexibility in searching, viewing, presenting and sorting media files than any other software in the market place. We believe we have achieved just that.

Can you please explain how this flexibility becomes valuable for the end user?

Bergman: It's all about allowing more ways to use the software and fitting into many different workflows. It makes simple tasks you only perform once fast and easy. Those repetitive or tedious tasks at the core of your business can now be highly automated. The completely new GUI allows the user to customize any kind of view and interact more intuitively with images and processes. For example, you can now drag-and-drop images almost everywhere. It is now possible to sort and list files based on their content, even down to their pixels. Thus, images from the same scene or the same shooting session can easily be grouped, even when they come from different sources. Side panels can be grouped to contain projects, jobs, actions, archives and more.

Views can be a window to pre-defined multi level searches. The new Classify view makes selecting, approving and routing files an easy, visual experience. The new Calendar view lets you retrieve files by job date, independent of archival status, location, category or classification. There are numerous other new features.

We have grown an installed FotoStation customer base of more than 2 million users during the last eight years. Many professionals give us great input about their needs. We formalized this process when FotoStation superusers at sessions in Norway and Sweden met to provide detailed feedback. We used this to create completely new ways of letting the end user tune FotoStation PRO to his or her needs.

There is a plethora of software available for digital camera owners today, much of which is bundled with the cameras. How do you intend to stand out?

Frenning: FotoWare participated in this bundling. Consumer versions of FotoStation were provided this way. FotoStation PRO is different. It is a tool for the professionals. It is for those who spend their days working with images. It makes managing huge numbers of large image files easy. Today, many media professionals are overwhelmed. The challenge of sorting, grouping, prioritizing, processing and distributing images and other media files to professional standards is daunting.

This is FotoStation PRO's unique strength. If you make a living of handling digital images, FotoStation PRO is the professional tool you need. While featuring hundreds of improvements to serve the digital photographer and creative artist, FotoStation PRO inherits all the timesaving and money-making capabilities that made earlier versions a success in production-oriented businesses. It is also part of a highly scalable system you will never outgrow.

Investing in the new FotoStation PRO will help your business now and in the future.