## SCOTT ADAMS

When you look at InfoManager's main menu, you will find that most of these 18 submenus are self-explanatory by their titles.
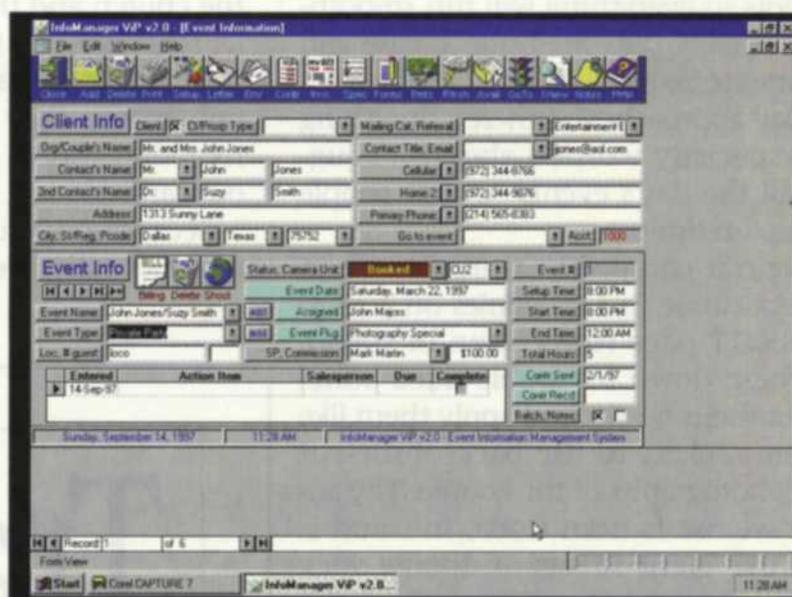
The "Event Information" menu is probably the most complex, and perhaps the most useful to the wedding photographer. It includes everything you ever wanted to know about a client and the photo sessions related to that client.

A typical VIP housekeeping menu, "Asset/Inventory." The program even provides room for a scan for insurance purposes.
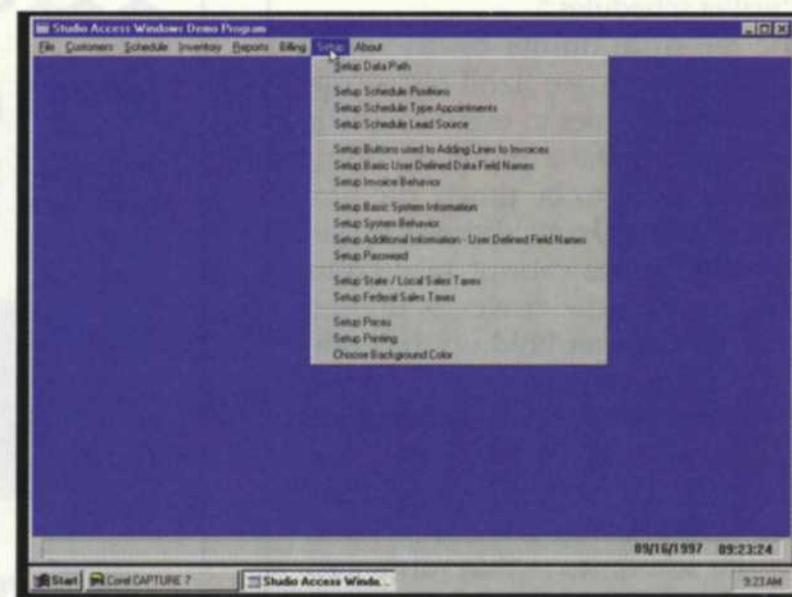
Studio Access uses seven pull-down menus across the top of the screen. Setup of the program is accomplished using the "Setup" pulldown menu.

Studio Management Software

Successful photography is a good blend of photographic skills and a well organized photo studio. In today's world of high-speed technology, computers have become necessary business tools to keep up with the competition. One of the key pieces of software for a photography business is studio management software. When computers first came on the scene, a billing program was about all there was to studio management. As computers have become more and more sophisticated, so have the programs. Today, when you shop for business software, you will be overwhelmed by the selection available. General business software will often not do the job adequately, as photographers have many intricate needs.

Several specialized programs have evolved that cater to the specific operations in a photography business. Before I introduce you to a couple of these programs, let's take a look at a few reasons why you need management software for your business.

Redundant Tasks

In every photo business there are operations that are repeated time and time again. You should not have to waste time looking for information on tasks every time you repeat the job. An information database in a management program keeps track of client information, cost of listed services, client contacts, equipment inventory, lab data, accounts receivable, accounts payable and it can even track time. The more these information pods are linked to each other,

the faster you can access specific information about your business.

Without that type of organization, you would have to look up a client's name, address, and billing information every time you did a job. As you typed the billing information, you would then have to go to your price list and look up the price of each service used by the client. Every time you wanted to contact someone you would look in the yellow pages, or your Rolodex, or on little scraps of paper stored on a corner of your desk. Without accurate record keeping, you may have to run film tests, bracket or take a wild guess each time you use a specific piece of photographic equipment. When you get to the end of the month and income is slim, you will have to hand-search your billing sheets to see who didn't get a bill or who isn't paying

on time. When you centralize information into one system, you cut down on time, eliminate mistakes, and make the same information available to everyone in the business. Organization pays off when you look at the bottom line.

Backup Insurance

No one wants to think of what would happen if you had a fire, flood or break-in. With a backup copy of your records in a separate building, you can be back on-line in no time. If you doubt me, just think for a minute about what you would do if you had a fire and lost all your records. How would you know who owes you money? How would you reconstruct your client list? Would you have to re-test all your photo systems for exposure or color balance? What are the serial numbers on all your lab equipment? What did you pay for that new piece of equipment? How much did you get when you sold that film processor? These are questions you should be able to easily answer if you have a backup copy of your business records. This information may just save your bacon when it comes to explaining things to the IRS.

Marketing

Everyone thinks they know how well their business is doing. In truth, most photographers spend so much of their time creating images, that they don't have time to analyze just how things are going, until it's too late. With a good management program, you can quickly access data on a specific service, client or your bottom dollar at any point in time. When you use this type of program to evaluate your business, you can easily analyze, streamline, modify and improve the way you do business. This collective information will tell you what makes the most money, which services are costing you money, or show you what would happen if you were to expand your services into a new area. If you want to stay competitive, you need management software to make wise marketing decisions.

InfoManager Vip 2.0

InfoManager is a Windows-based management program for both videographers and photographers. Eighteen modules make up this extremely versatile business management program. When you first start the program, you are faced with a basic tool bar at the top of your screen, and 18 menu

buttons that take you to various parts of the program. When you access any of the submenus, a new expanded tool bar appears at the top. After you have completed the task, you can close and return to the main menu. Each submenu has its own special toolbar and more buttons that refine your search in that specific area.

Menus include the following categories:

Daily Action	Items Venues
Invoices	Event Information
Event Packages	Accts. Payable
Address Book	InfoViewer
Accts. Receivable	Employees/Contr
Check Availability	Travel Log Expenses
Contracts	Music Manager
Assets/Inventory	Reports
Letter Writer	
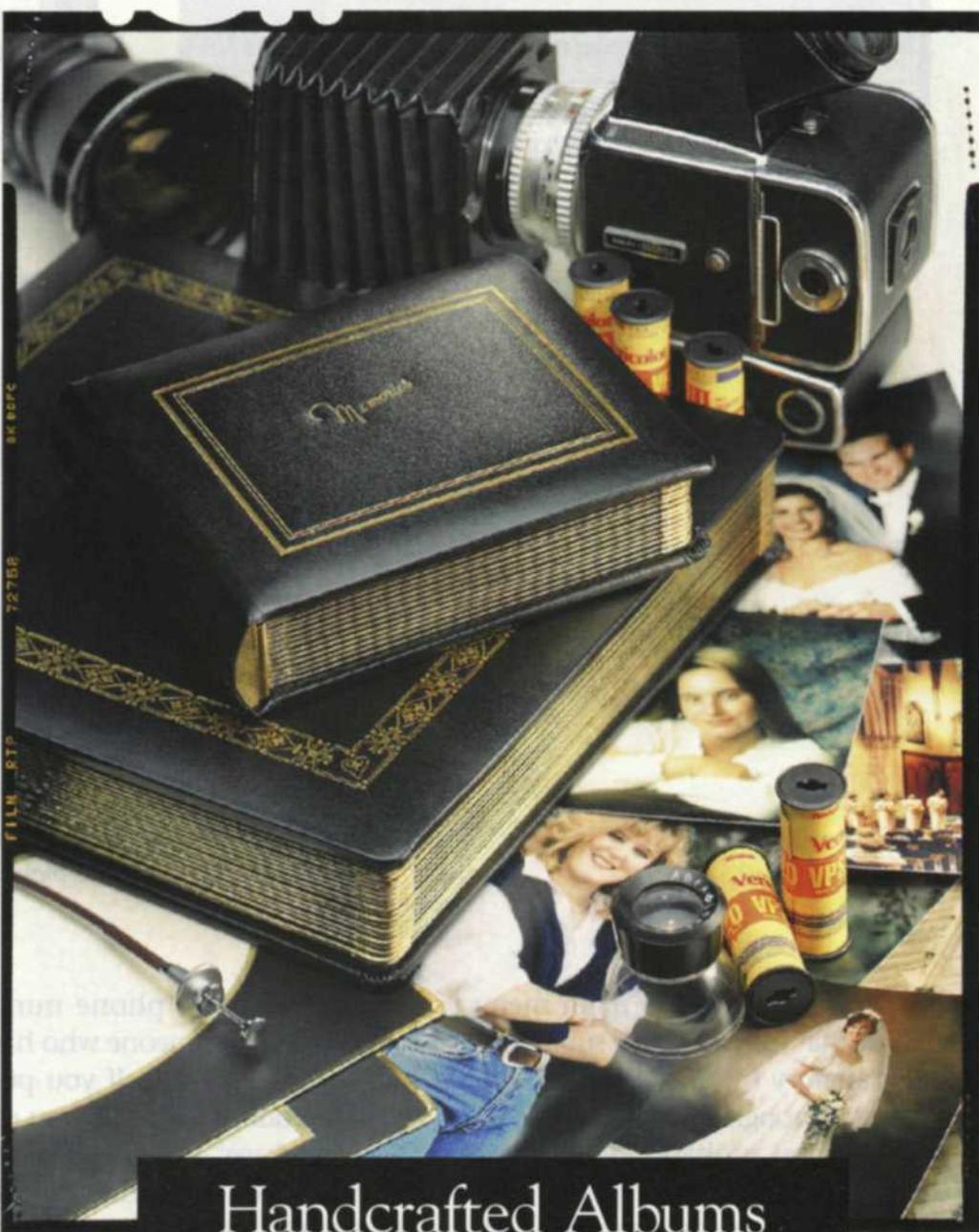
Handcrafted Albums and Memory Books for All Occasions
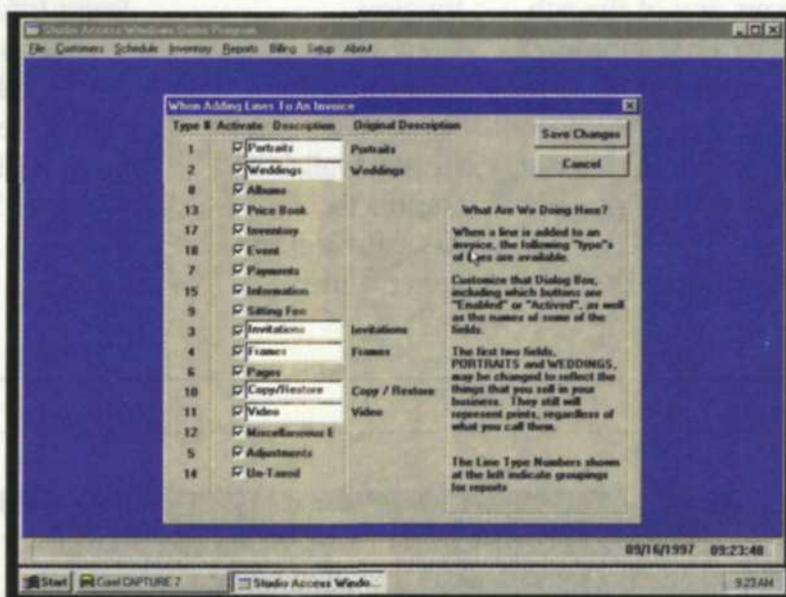
Studio Access features a helpful "What Are We Doing Here?" help section that tries to anticipate your questions.
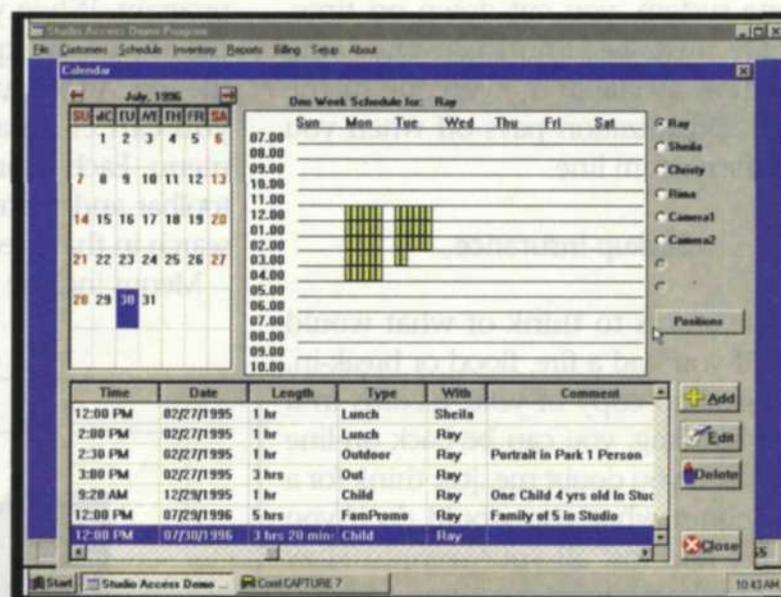
The Studio Access calendar provides graphical and text data in a variety of configurations in one window. There's a lot of information in one screen.
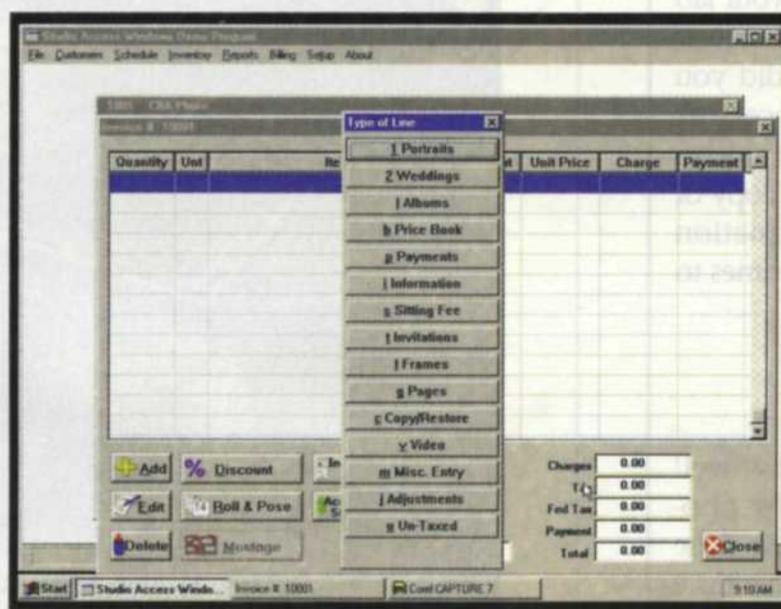
Studio Access' liberal use of submenus makes inputting data fast and straightforward.

When you first look at the main menu you will find that most of these submenus are self-explanatory by their titles. As you start to browse through the submenus, you will find that you probably don't need them all. As you expand your photo business, you can add categories to match your expansion.

The "Event Information" menu is probably the most complex, and perhaps the most useful to the wedding photographer. It includes everything you ever wanted to know about a client and the photo sessions related to that client. Inside this menu, you will find two more submenus that provide detailed information on billing and specifics about shooting locations. Most of the data in each menu is linked to data elsewhere, so you only have enter it once.

The "Venues" menu button connects you to an information box that contains names, addresses, phone numbers, and even a map for someone who has not been to a specific location. If you put together special wedding packages, you can use the "Event Package" menu to assemble groups of services. You can then modify a wedding package and save it as a new type of service.

The "Invoices," "Accts. Payable," and the "Accts. Receivable" menus deal directly with income and expenses in your business. The data entered on these pages is used to prepare the reports generated in the "Reports" menu.

Housekeeping menus include "Asset/ Inventory," "Contracts," "Employees," and the "Music Manager." Together they show the diversity of this very complete management program. The first time I jumped through the many menus, I was amazed at the amount of information that could be stored and accessed by this program. If you

really like a lot of bells and whistles in a business management program, then this is it. You can use all of it, or just parts and expand it as you grow. The menus are easy to follow, and there is very little need for any instruction in its use. The links between the menus are great, and reduce the amount of time spent entering duplicate data.

Studio Access

Studio Access is also a Windows-based program that uses seven pull-down menus across the top of the screen. Setup of the program is accomplished using the "Setup" pulldown menu. With 16 submenus, you can enter prices for products and services, sales tax and where you are going to store the data, as well as modify the different forms and invoices.

Once this step is complete, you then move to the "Customer" pulldown menu where you enter a name, address and phone number and save it as a specific customer's file. As you do jobs for a customer, you add account data, job schedules, and any special information related to the job. The key to this program is that most of the data entered into the program is centered around the customer database.

Job schedules are maintained with the "Schedule" pulldown. Assignments and jobs are listed by month, week, day and time of day. There is also room to note the duration of the shoot, type of shoot, who is the photographer and any additional comments.

When you pull down the "Inventory" menu, you are offered a variety of cross information about the items to be recorded. Item identification, name, manufacturer, cost, retail price and discount code are just a few of the descriptions used to create your inventory. If you want it really simple, you can just skip the blanks you feel you will not use.

The money reports are found under the "Report" pulldown, which subdivides into daily cash, invoice reports and sales tax reports. These reports pull data from the various entries made in the customer base information records.

The "Billing" pulldown brings up a menu that lets you run all the billing, just one bill or a manually input bill. The billing screen refreshes your client information, invoice due dates, moneys due, interest and the type of billing you are making. Each billing invoice can be manually edited for special prices or unusual billing situations.

Comparing the Two

The big difference between these two programs is that InfoManager puts all its menus up-front, while Studio Access streamlines the look with hidden menus that you may not often use. Both programs have their advantages, and I think most photographers would be split on which program is the best suited to handle their particular business needs. Each of the programs have plenty of versatility and can easily adapt to service all unique photography businesses. The main point is that to survive in this highly competitive market, you need to use all the tools readily available. Photo management software should be at the top of your list.

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For more information, circle 120