



# Wow Factor



## EPSON P4500 MULTI-MEDIA STORAGE VIEWER \$1299

I reviewed Epson's predecessor, the P2000, for *Tone's* July 2005 issue. The impressive P2000 garnered our Tone Gold Award and went on to find many homes with enthusiast and professional photographers around the country. A professional friend of mine never goes anywhere without her digital SLR and her P2000.

Time and technology wait for nobody and now Epson has sprung the P4500 on the market - a market that has changed a bit in the past 11 months.

The P4500 addresses some of the small issues that existed with the P2000; namely file compatibility, maximum image file sizes and transfer speeds. It's now compatible with more file types, handles the largest files on offer from the current crop of dSLR cameras (even the King of the hill Canon 1DS MkII) and offers transfer speeds 2.5 times faster than the P2000, thanks to USB2.

With storage needs rapidly growing (the result of ever-larger digital image file sizes) it will come as no surprise that the P4500 doubles the previous model's storage at 80 gigabytes. An evolving public awareness of the vulnerability of digital imagery and the need for back up storage will ensure that the P4500 looks even more relevant today than the P2000 did a year ago. I suspect there will be a wider audience for its talents as well.

So what does a P4500 multi-media storage viewer do? It combines a hard drive, CF and SD card readers and the most amazing 3.8-inch screen with a rechargeable battery in a solid, compact and attractive frame that's beautifully designed, crafted and built.

Other manufacturers have produced similar devices, but Epson's ace in the hole is that screen - the Photo Fine 3.8-inch LCD. This is still the best small LCD I've ever clapped eyes on. It is razor-sharp, has superb colour and contrast, and is big enough to watch without getting that 'here comes a migraine' cross-eyed feeling.

Who needs one? Digital photographers will quickly recognise the talents on offer here, whether as a portable storage device freeing up storage on memory cards and extending their range or as a 'show and tell' machine that can display their complete portfolio on the go.

The P4500 will handle images up to 30 megapixels in size (up from a maximum of 17.8 megapixels in the P2000), as well as dealing with RAW files from Epson, Nikon, Canon, Konica Minolta, Pentax and Olympus cameras.

The moving picture fraternity is also well served as the P4500 does an excellent job with full motion video playback in MPEG1, 2, 4 ASP, DivX, Motion JPEG and WMV formats. I reformatted an episode of *American Dad* to MPEG4 as part of my test and it played very smoothly, displaying the same hyper-real cartoon colours as the original file.

Did I mention music? The P4500 recognises and plays MP3, MPEG4, AAC and WMA files with aplomb. Sound quality is excellent through headphones, but still a little weak volume-wise through the built-in speaker. It's fine for watching video clips or the odd TV programme when you're out and about, but won't rock the house if you're seriously listening to music.

With hard drive costs plummeting, the price increase of this product to \$1299 is something of a surprise. I would have liked Epson to deliver this at the P2000's original \$999 price point. The issue I have is that in 2006 money and with careful shopping, \$1299 can deliver a pretty well specified, entry-level notebook computer that may prove more tempting to some. Of course, a notebook won't weigh 438g, won't slip easily into the pocket of your camera bag or coat and - perhaps most convincingly - it definitely won't have the 'wow' factor of the P4500.

If you've already got the laptop and the digital SLR camera, check out the P4500. But, fair warning; to see one is to want one. Dollars be damned. ■ TIM STEELE

### DETAILS



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### SPECIFICATIONS

- 80GB hard drive (73.8GB usable)
- Lithium-Ion battery
- Two card readers (Type I/II 3.3v CF, Microdrive, SD, MMC, MMCplus. Other cards work with CF adapter, not included)
- 3.8 inch LCD, 640x480 VGA with 260,000 colours
- USB 2.0 connectivity
- USB direct print (with compatible Epson printers)
- AV out (mini)
- Compatibility: Windows ME/2000/XP, Macintosh - OS X 10.2 or later
- Software supplied: Epson Link2, QuickTime

### PROS

- ✦ Build quality
- ✦ Portability
- ✦ Amazing LCD
- ✦ Transfer speed

### CONS

- ✦ Price point
- ✦ Speaker volume

### VERDICT

A powerful and desirable package

Aesthetics	98%
Performance	95%
Features	92%
Functionality	88%
Price Value	82%
Overall	

