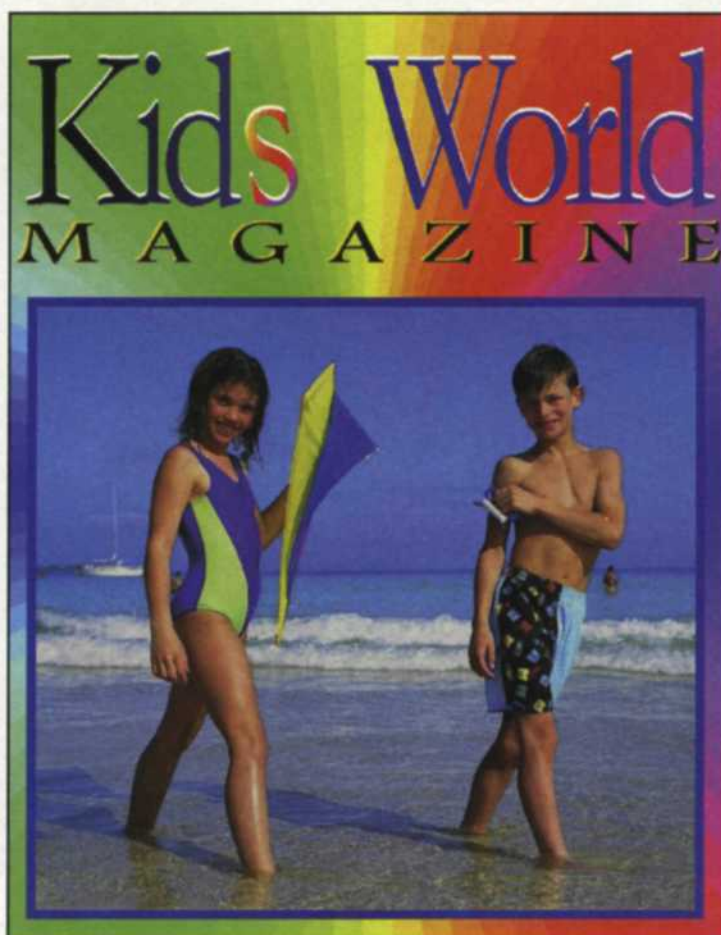### SCOTT ADAMS

Left—Fun from PhotoSuite's "Fun menu" includes a wide assortment of magazine covers, sports cards and posters. Above—Sample greeting card made with your image and PhotoSuite's SE Starter kit.

## MGI PhotoSuite & More

Recently, I received a family of MGI software editing programs for review. Also included was an extensive photo research sheet MGI Software had recently compiled in order to better understand their marketplace. I had seen the numbers a few years ago about the amount of photographers and photographs taken today. But, when I saw these new numbers, I quickly understood why software-editing programs have become such an integral part of PC photography.

MGI's research showed that an estimated 63 billion pictures are taken every year. That works out to 2,300 per second. (I would hate to be the lab tech who had to process all those images!) Of these images, over 25 million have been converted to the digital format. The research also showed that there are approximately 200 million personal computers in use, and many of these users are busy taking some of those 63 billion pictures. Additional research from the Photo Marketing Association showed MGI that over half the households using PCs had an interest in photo-editing on their computers.

In response to this increased interest in PC photography, MGI offers a variety of specialized software programs designed to fit the various skill levels of the PC photo user.



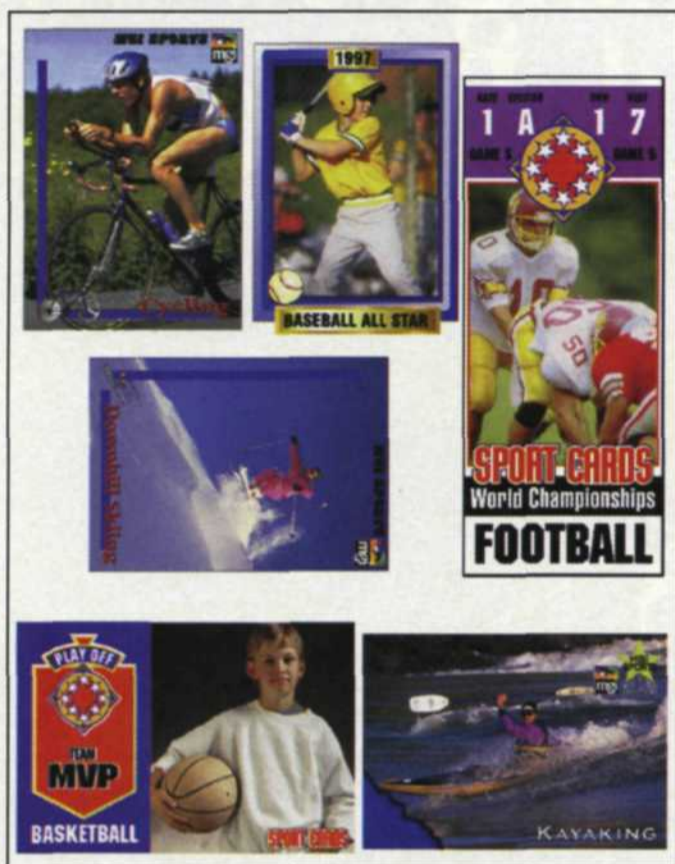Another magazine cover made in PhotoSuite's Fun menu.

### PhotoSuite

The main program, called PhotoSuite ($49.95), is designed to tackle almost any digital project that comes to your own photo world. The program has two levels of editing controls. The first level includes those editing controls found in most high-end editing programs today. These controls number in the hundreds, and do everything from re-sizing an image to spotting the dust specks. If you can do it in the darkroom, you can usually do it using these editing tools. Some do basic skills, while others tackle the more advanced problems.
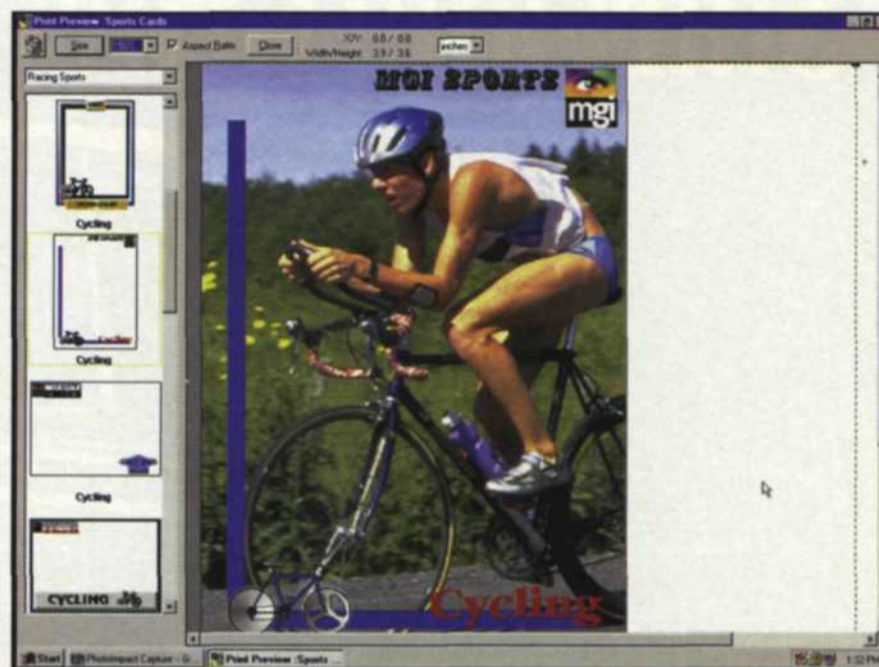
The most basic tools for PhotoSuite are located in a toolbox along the side of the edit screen. The select tools are some of the most commonly used tools and include circular, rectangle, freehand, and the famous magic wand. The first three tools let you manually select an area to edit, while the magic wand automatically selects areas of like pixels. Eight drawing tools allow you to add basic shapes to your image. You will then find the line draw, pen, paint bucket, airbrush, eraser, font tool, eyedropper, and finally, my personal favorite tool, the clone tool. With this tool you can remove dust, fix scratches, reduce red-eye, hide power lines, and just make magic happen.

Across the top of the PhotoSuite edit screen are the more advanced level of tools that are activated with icon buttons. The bulk of these controls change color balance, contrast and brightness, print to output device, cut and paste, zoom in/out, rotate, save to disk, and a host of other necessary image changes and functions.

Three of the buttons are grouped together and offer more creative func-

A sampling of sports trading cards and tickets possible with MGI's easy to use software.



All of the elements you'll need in designing your sports cards are conveniently located so that you can access them in print preview mode.

tions. The picture frame button allows you to select a picture frame and add it to your photo. There are dozens to select from and the finished print will come out looking like your photo is mounted in a picture frame. Pressing the lens effect buttons brings up a series of color graduation effects that simulate the effect of fog, sepia, warm tone, cool tone, or you can even give your photo a tan. The special effects button lets your imagination go wild so you can posterize, twirl, stretch, convert to cartoon, emboss, add ripple, and much more. Each effect previews in a before and after version that can be controlled with the slip of a slider.

### The Fun Menu

The second level of edit tools are more automated and located under a pulldown menu called "fun." When this fun menu drops down, you can select the activity command which brings up an eight-choice screen. From the top row you can select functions that load a picture, edit a picture, view a photo album, look at a slide show of digital pictures, or print to a printer. The bottom row sends you to extended programs that let you make sports cards, greeting cards, calendars, magazine covers, or do crazy fun things with your images like placing a person's head on a cartoon character.

When you go to the sports card program, it will take the picture you are edit-



PhotoSuite uses a wide variety of smart-looking calendar templates.

ing at the time and place it on a variety of sports cards. You pick the card from a hundred listed on the left side, and the program will automatically paste and mask your image in place. The only thing you have to do is size and crop it the way you want it and then print it to your favorite printer.
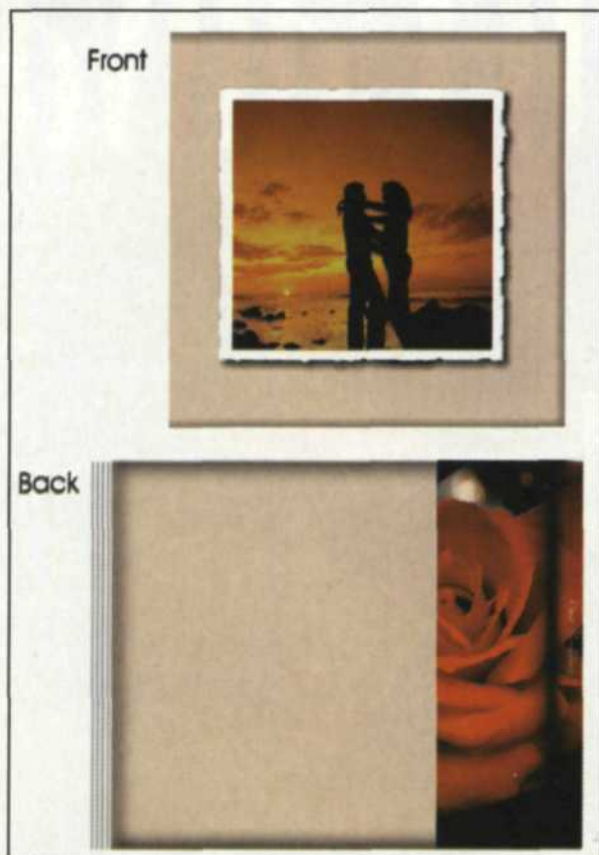
When you select the greeting card program, you are first directed to a folding instructions diagram and given the option to pick a design from birthdays, Valentine's Day, Christmas, social

events, and other miscellaneous holidays. If you want to add your own text to the card, you can print the card to file, reload it and add text at a later time using any text program or PhotoSuite, itself.
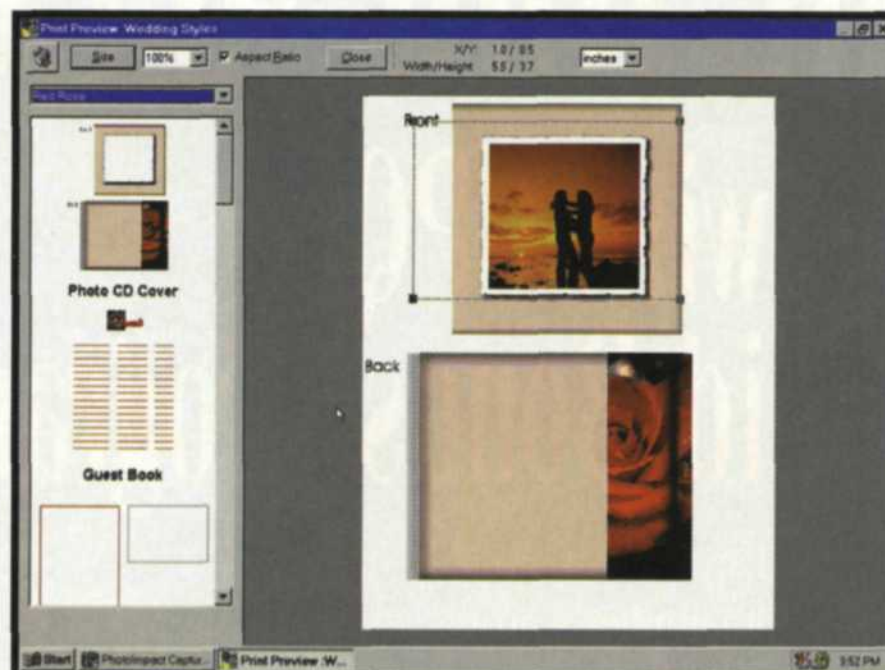
If you want to create a calendar or poster, first load an image into PhotoSuite and then select this function. This program works much like the sport card program, and the possibilities include various levels of calendars and inspirational posters, as well as certificates of completion for dozens of situations. You might want to make a Man of the Year, Employee of the Month, or how about making your client a musical merit award. If one of these certificates doesn't exactly fit the situation, there are also several generic ones.

If you want to place an image on a magazine cover, you can go to this program with your specific image and it will be directly placed on the cover with the appropriate text added. You can select from general interest, business, science and technologies, or put the image on a sports magazine. Again, the only action you have to take is sizing and placement of the image on the cover. The program will mask your image into the cover and then overlay the type. Print it out and you may find yourself on the cover of *National Geographic!*

The last of the sub-programs takes you to another menu that lets you create pic-

Front

Back

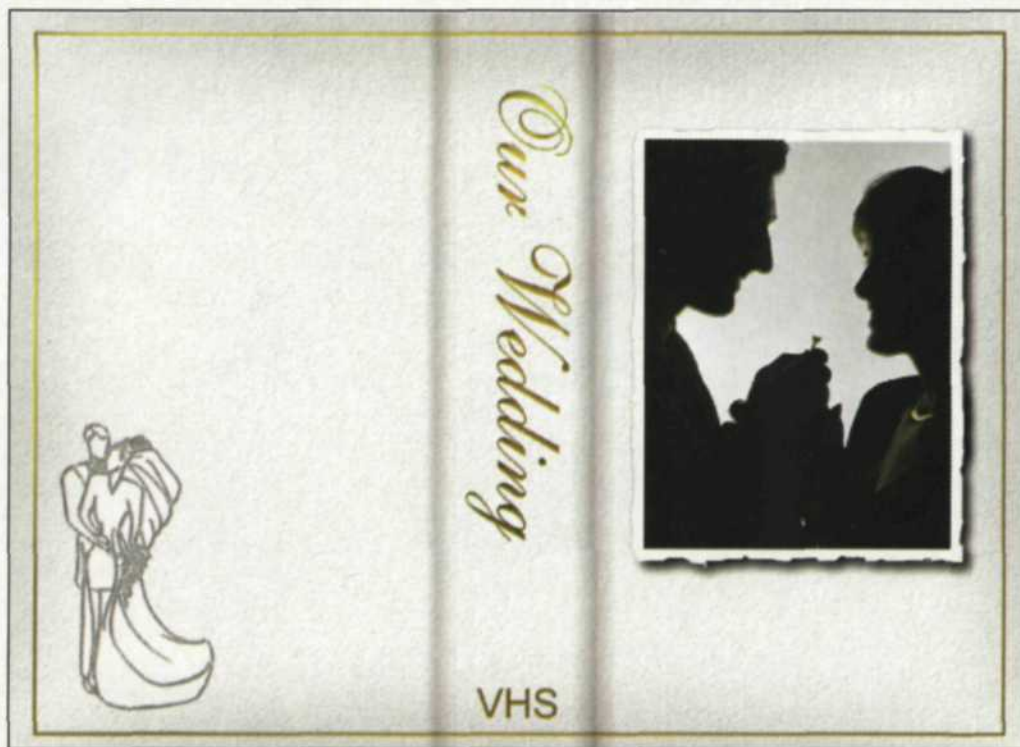A wedding CD cover produced in PhotoSuite's Wedding Kit.



Designing in PhotoSuite is almost idiot-proof. The template window at the left allows you to choose from a variety of styles and formats.

ture frames, lens effects, special effects, or three new programs. With these programs you can add a word balloon, swap heads, or add cartoon parts to your picture. This program has several cartoon noses, eyes, lips, and ears that you can swap onto real photos, so you better warn your friends to be nice!

### Sport Cards & Wedding SE

Two spin-off programs use a Special Edition (SE) version of PhotoSuite and offer two popular specialized subjects. These SE versions cost less than the full version of PhotoSuite but focus mainly towards these two popular subjects. Sport Cards PhotoSuite SE ($19.99) is designed to allow the photographer to bring in photos, design their own card, print it out and mount it on sport card material. The program even has a menu for creating the data found on the backside of the cards. The Sport Cards starter kit comes with a roll of color film, film mailers, ink jet paper, sport card material, and easy instruction for putting together your own cards.

If you want to create your own wed-



A typical wedding videotape cover from PhotoSuite's many templates.

ding cards or send cards to a friend, the Wedding PhotoSuite SE starter kit ($29.99) is just the ticket. The software program is very similar to the Sport Cards program except it uses a variety of appropriate wedding templates. You can make your own invitations, CD covers, wine labels, VHS labels, thank you notes, and just about every type of card or label used for a wedding. Again, you grab the photo you want to work with and bring it into the program. It masks and fits the image into the template, while you size and place the image. The kit also includes blank wine labels, five free cou-

pons for Photos-on-Disk, and a book of creative program ideas.

MGI also makes a very sophisticated video editing program called VideoWave ($99.95) which is designed to capture video and images and output them to AVI, Quicktime, or MPEG formats. You can add special effects, animate titles, and add a music track. The program also includes a multimedia Library.

Obviously, MGI's extensive market research has paid off. They offer some of the most innovative programs designed to enhance your photography. Photo-Suite offers the tools to make image editing easy and Sports Card, PC Wedding Kit and Video Wave help make the fun begin. By the way, PhotoSuite and the other MGI programs described here are designed to run in the PC environment only. Sorry Mac users! To obtain further information on all the MGI products call 1-888-MGI-SOFT or visit them on the Internet at www.mgisoft.com.

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