

NEWSLETTER



June 2007

In this newsletter I am straying from Adobe Photoshop Elements somewhat to give you some neat **free** programs that may interest you. If nothing else I know the word free will get your attention!

PANORAMIO

For those of you who enjoy traveling and sharing photographs there is a neat site where you can post your pictures on a "Google Earth" map and view pictures by others. It is also useful in that registered (free) users can store up to 2GB of pictures for viewing. Here is a sample showing Walnut Creek, CA the blue pins represent pictures that have been posted (with a thumbnail on the left). Clicking on the picture gives a full size view.

The image is a screenshot of the Panoramio website interface. On the left side, there is a grid of 24 small thumbnail images representing various photos posted by users. On the right side, there is a satellite map of Walnut Creek, California. The map shows major roads like Geary Rd, Walnut St, and Interstate 680. Numerous blue pins are scattered across the map, indicating the locations where photos have been posted. At the bottom left of the map area, there is a text label "All photos in Google Earth" and navigation buttons for "Previous" and "Next".

Try it out; it is free and quite interesting: <http://www.panoramio.com/>

GENTEX

For those of you at the May meeting you saw the free texture generator demonstrated. This is a really nice piece of freeware for randomly generating textures.

To download go to <http://www.texturemaker.com/download.php> and look for this download

	GenTex - Genetic Textures v1.0 (15. December 2002)
	Type: Simple Genetic Texture Generator
	Platform: Windows 98/NT/2000/XP
	Requirements: Pentium II, 64MB RAM, 640x480
	Languages: English
	License: Freeware
	Size: 413,841b (0.39MiB)
Notes: Free for non-commercial use only	

It is about the fifth one down in the list, the readme file is sparse but the program is very simple. The only thing to remember is that if you create a texture you like, save it! The program randomly generates these textures and each one is unique so you will not

generate the one you like again!

IRFANVIEW, GIMP, & PAINT.NET

Although we concentrate on PhotoShop Elements I like to look at other software that is available for “interfering” with images. If you just want to retouch images a little or convert images for e-mailing, change to another format or reduce the resolution for web posting then Photoshop may be overkill. There are several free editing programs available and here is a sample:

IRFANVIEW

Do you need to resize your images before emailing them or posting to the Web? Or how about converting one file format to another? If so, you'll like this free program. Irfanview is a terrific file viewer that lets you open and convert just about any type of image or picture file. It is very easy to use and install it is a great little program plus the price is right. www.irfanview.com

GIMP

This is a very powerful program with layers and lots of filters. It has numerous other features such as removing dust and scratches but the help feature is not very extensive. It has a steep learning curve and it is definitely not for beginners however most users of PhotoShop Elements will be able to use it. www.gimp.org

PAINT.NET

This is an open-source freeware editor with all the essential tools, including those for cropping, rotating, resizing, adjusting colors, and creating collages.

Paint.NET supports the most popular image formats--JPEG, PNG, GIF, TIFF, and others--but not super high resolution ones like RAW. However, you'll find such basic effects as Red Eye Removal, Emboss, Mosaic, and Oil Painting, and a few higher-end features such as Clone Stamp, Lasso Select, and Magic Wand. Like a full-fledged graphics package, Paint.NET even supports layers and an actions manager. The interface is very convenient, and the panels are

semitransparent, so you won't need to hide them. This is said to be a replacement for Microsoft Paint but it is more comprehensive. Paint.NET requires the .NET framework. Go to www.getpaint.net

PICFINDER

As you all are aware I collect pictures for my “Stock Pictures” folder. There are several websites such as morguefile, stockxchng, freefoto.com which have royalty free images for downloading but a comparatively new site has appeared <http://www.picfindr.com/>.

This site searches several sites (including the ones mentioned above) for pictures and list them for you as thumbnails. It is much faster than visiting individual sites.

You may have to sign up to download the images at some of the sites but it is free and I don't think they use your log in for any nefarious purpose.

Just to give you two examples I entered “Bus” and “Keys” in the search box and chose these two images, both high resolution and with a full size as shown below the image:



Original size 2272 x 1704 pixels



Original Size 1024 x 768 pixels

That is the free segment of this newsletter, here is a new program that isn't free.

ESSENTIALS for PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS

This is a new program for Elements by onOne Software. OnOne is well known in PhotoShop circles as producing plug in tools for the full blown version of PhotoShop which retail from about \$125 to over \$300! The biggest sellers they have are Genuine Fractals (an enlarging system), Mask Pro (a selection tool) and Photoframe (frames for images). Essentials for Elements sells for \$59.99, which isn't cheap, so what do you get for this price?

The Essentials for Elements are:

- Make It Better, an auto fix type program

- Cut It Out, a simplified Mask Pro
- Frame It, Photoframe capabilities
- Enlarge It, A method of increasing the size of images up to 400% with no loss in quality.

As you can see with the exception of the first item, Make It Better, the other three do the same as the stand alone programs that they sell. I am sure they are not full of the features of the full blown programs just like PhotoShop Elements does not have all the features of PhotoShop CS3. However I felt it was worth a look so I have shelled out my money and purchased a copy. I should mention that the program is designed for Elements 4 or 5 and works with Windows XP or Vista and Mac.

I have only just started playing with it so at this moment in time I cannot say too much about it. However I will experiment and hopefully give some meaningful demonstrations at future meetings.

I have tried the “Make It Better” on a couple of images and it does a credible job but nothing that Elements cannot do itself.

myPhotopipe.com

This is an on line print lab with numerous possibilities for your prints. A run of the mill 4 x 6 glossy runs 19¢ vs. 12¢ at Snapfish or Costco, but their strong suit is the array of displays they offer from large panoramas to multiple shots arrangers and framed together. These prices seem very reasonable and the results, as shown on the web site, look impressive.

The web site is very well laid out and they have several ways of uploading your images plus how you want the end product.

I have a couple of friends who are very serious about their prints and they swear by them. I haven't tried them yet but I will be shortly. If anyone does try them let us have a report for publication. Also if you have a favorite place for prints please write a little memo about it and share with us.

NEW TUTORIAL



Some time ago I did a demonstration of “painting” an image onto a vehicle (yes that one shown here) but I didn't write anything about it. I have had a request to explain the technique so I have just posted another tutorial on my website “Creating Displacement Art Pictures.”

That's all for this newsletter remember any comments or contributions are welcomed.