

NEWSLETTER



December 2010

PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS 9

Just in time for Christmas Adobe has come out with the latest version of Elements.

Photoshop Elements 9, the latest version of Adobe's image editing and organizing application, adds a few interesting features, but nothing of an oh-wow nature, unless you're opting for the Macintosh version, which adds several features found in previous Windows versions.

Of course, Photoshop Elements 9 does add some new editing and enhancement features. In its Guided Editing mode (also known as the lead-me-by-the-nose mode), you'll find a new reflection effect, pop art effects, and "Lomo" camera effects. If you had the know-how, you could probably pull these off without the step-by-step but this is much easier and the results are probably better than you could do by yourself. Likewise, the new "Perfect Portrait" feature merely steps you through the use of various editing tools, such as the spot-healing brush and the red-eye removal tool, to improve your portraits. If you're familiar with the tools, you may not need the assistance, but if you aren't, the instructions provided in the sidebar are helpful and a timesaver. .

One very useful item is layer masks, a new feature in Elements 9 (but which has been in the full version of Photoshop for eons). With a layer mask, you can easily vary the opacity of elements within layers of your composition. That is, you can select or mask a portion of a layer, then reveal only that portion, at say 50 percent. That ability helps create interesting compositions of multiple objects.

The spot-healing brush, already a powerful cloning tool for correcting blemishes and the like, has also been updated, so you can now use it to remove large unwanted portions of images. For example, I used it to remove a person (me) from an image, even though I was standing in front of a pretty complicated background. It required several passes, but eventually I couldn't tell that I'd ever been in the picture.

I was also impressed by Elements' improved panorama feature. I used it to stitch together several images, and as it did in its previous version, Elements did a phenomenal job of combining the shots and blending their edges. However in past

versions you were left with an image that required cropping to obtain a square or rectangular image. This is a panorama created from six individual pictures using Elements 9.



But now the tool offers to fill in around the edges of the panorama instead of cropping the image, it did a great job of filling in the missing areas and creating a beautiful panorama. See below. However don't try this with a complex picture; check to see how much needs to be filled, if it is a large amount or very "busy" then it is likely that the fill



will be incorrect. I had one occasion where the program told me it couldn't perform a fill as I had "insufficient RAM" on the computer, this on a machine with a quad core processor and 8 GGB of memory! This is also true for comparatively simple fill on my laptop with 4GB of memory.

I think the inclusion of the layer masks and the improved spot healing feature justifies the purchase for those who are upgrading from version 7 or older. For those of you who have version 8 it is really whether you do enough image manipulating that layer masks would be beneficial. If so then the price of around \$75 will seem a good deal otherwise, as I usually recommend, I would wait to see what version 10 brings this time next year. Adobe has again put together a very good "how to" book of over 300 pages in PDF format on their web site. If anyone is interested I can get it printed in color and comb bound at a very good price from a local printer. Just let me know.

Unfortunately, the Elements organizer doesn't leave me with the same warm, happy feeling. The organizer remains a separate application (it serves in Adobe Premiere Elements, too), and the separateness makes working with multiple photos clunky, even more so as Adobe adds features. When you want to perform substantive edits on an image in the organizer, you must select the image, click on a "Fix" tab, choose which editing mode you want to use, and wait for the editor to load. You'll then have two Photoshop icons in your taskbar, one for the organizer and one for the editor, and both applications' interfaces look very similar (with very tiny text and icons, by the way, even on a 24-inch monitor). Want to add tags to a photo? Use the organizer. Want to create a photo book from multiple images? Use the editor. It can get very confusing and irritating.

Another example: When you're done working on a photo in the editor, you can now click on a button that is supposed to let you share it on Facebook; but when you do so, it sends the image back to the organizer application to complete the action. Amazing but true: This is the first time that Elements has had a tie-in to Facebook. Once you authorize the application to upload images, you can select one or more images enter an album title and description, and Elements will compress and upload them to your Facebook account, with automatic posting to your wall. That makes it much easier to post several photos at once. However this is hardly a feature that will drive people out in droves to purchase this edition.

The organizer's auto-analyzer feature attempts to discern and categorize photographic characteristics such as the quality of the shot, whether it's in- or out-of-focus, and the presence of faces. The auto-analyzer first appeared in the Windows version of Elements 8, and now makes its appearance in the new Mac version. The analyzer worked very slowly on my 64-bit Windows 7 system, often requiring 30 seconds or more to analyze a single shot, and at one point it sucked up more than 3GB of RAM, on top of the approximately 400MB of RAM reserved by the main Elements organizer application, and another few hundred MB for the editor. Elements is still a 32-bit application, by the way, unlike its full blown CS5 brethren.

Elements 9 has new options to create things: For example, select some images in the organizer, choose Photobook from a menu, get sent off to the editor application, and Elements then prearranges the photos in an attractive layout that can be printed on your own printer or uploaded to Kodak Picture Gallery or Shutterfly. You can monkey with the

layout, of course, but in another significant tweak, by clicking a button in the editor, you can switch to "advanced" mode, which allows you to make edits with any Elements tool. That is, if you can figure out on which layer your image is located, the editor creates many different layers, and it wasn't always easy to work on them. The editor doesn't name the layers in such a way that you can use the names to figure out where things are.

Also, when I tried to fix the red-eye in one frame, the application told me, "The smart object is not directly editable." Huh? Not until I "simplified" the layer (using a right click menu command) could I make the edit. Nor could I edit elements of a collage, I had to edit the original image, then reimport it into the collage (the editor did not auto update the image within the collage, as other Adobe applications do).

I will demonstrate some of these features at future meetings starting in January 2011 so see you then.

PHOTOSHOP BUSINESS

ARE YOU A PHOTOGRAPHER? - S2 (edgewater fl)

Reply to: xxxxxxxxxx

Date: xxxxxxxxxx

photoshopper here. can do anything in photoshop;
2 dollars per photo.
heres a small sample of my work
thanks!



They say you can find anything on Craig's List including things you don't want to find but this has to be a keeper!

Sent to me by a friend in Florida, I always thought people there were different.

EASY IMAGE MODIFIER

Do you have images (e.g. vacation pictures, screenshots ...) that you want to resize, rename, sort, realign, change format or add a watermark quickly and without having to use Elements? **Easy Image Modifier** is exactly what you need because it's absolutely straightforward, runs with no need for installation and even most advanced operations

are set up with just a few mouse-clicks. It allows you to modify batches of images quickly to be sent via e-mail, posted on the Internet or just for archiving purposes! To get a free download go to: <http://www.inspire-soft.net> to obtain.

POLAROID IMAGES

I think everyone has owned a Polaroid camera sometime. With their slightly out of focus look and color that was a little off they have been a staple for photographs for years. Unfortunately they are no longer in production but if you yearn for the old days you can still get the effect with a product from a company called Rollip.

Rollip is a cool and nostalgic online tool. It can convert your photos into various “shades” of Polaroid. You'll instantly notice the soft focus and slightly off coloring. You can stick your converted photo into the familiar white frame and you can write a message across the bottom or you can forgo the frame and just apply the visual effect.

Go to: <http://www.rollip.com/start> for full details.

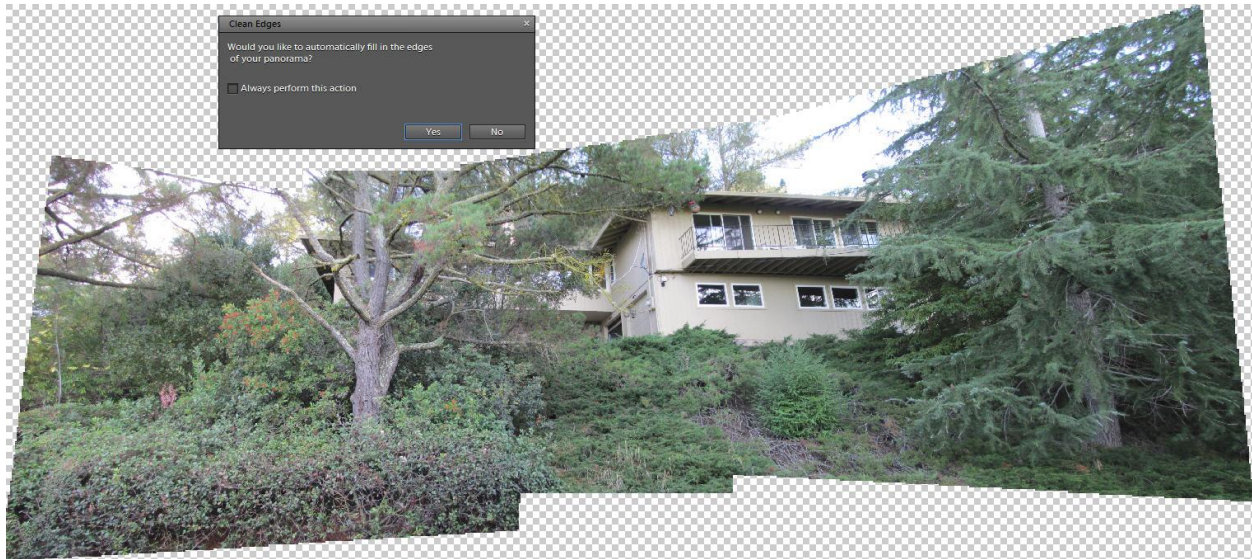
PANORAMA PLUS

After giving praise to Elements 9 for its panorama feature I got hold of Panorama Plus X4 from Serif software. I have used their desktop publishing and web products and found them very good. Of course I have to say that as they originated very near to my home town! But that apart I tried making a panorama with Elements 9 and Panorama Plus using four images of my house.

Panorama Plus took the images and created a very realistic panorama without fuss and very quickly. It also showed the recommended crop line to produce a rectangular image which was very realistic, see below



Elements 9 took any extraordinary amount of time to produce a panoramic image from the same four images and when it was finished it looked like this:



The “clean edges, fill” dialog opened and I checked for Elements to give me a filled image. Much to my surprise I received a shortage of memory notice.



. Consequently I had to crop the merged image giving me the very narrow, distorted and unattractive image shown below.



The Panorama Plus image is very realistic and shows what I had in mind when taking the photographs. At \$19.99 I think Panorama Plus is a good deal if you want to create realistic panoramas.

I apologize for missing many meetings over the last months. As you all know I have been having some health problems but I think that finally everything is getting back to normal and I am hoping that I can participate fully in the future. I have even bought myself a new laptop with a separate video card and lots of RAM to better handle photo editing! At least that was the excuse I used for buying.

Also Peggy and I would like to thank all of you for responding to her survey of what you wanted in the Elements SIG. We are going to take that to heart and concentrate on the regular features in the software and simple solutions to photographic missteps.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and a very prosperous and healthy New Year.

