

PhotoPlus v9

edit and renovate your photos

By James Taylor

PhotoPlus is an image-editing tool that allows you to create, manipulate and enhance photographs, bitmap graphics and web animations.

It has all the usual tools for everything from photo restoration to colour and tonal adjustments, distortions and other special effects. It can also acquire images from scanners and digital cameras. Output is suitable for print, multimedia and the web.

For the techies among you it can handle vector shapes and text as well as bitmap-based images; it can manipulate multi-layers, create cut outs, add fills and treat text as editable images. If you're not technical, you only need to know that this image-editing software can do almost everything you're likely to need it to do.

NEW EFFECTS

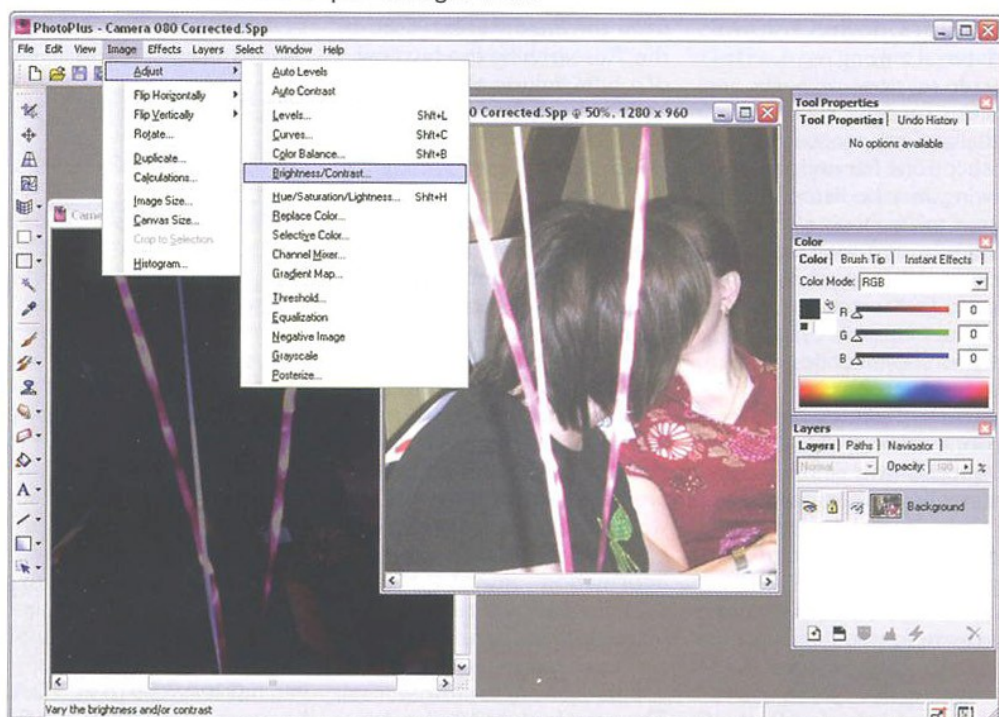
Among version 9's new effects are stained glass, half-tone, motion blur, zoom and radial blur. Two effects that have been made more usable are replace colour and edge detection. You can also create tiles from your photos, reshape them into spheres and cylinders and give them glowing edges (just a few of the ways to irritate your family by distorting their carefully posed images).

MANUAL

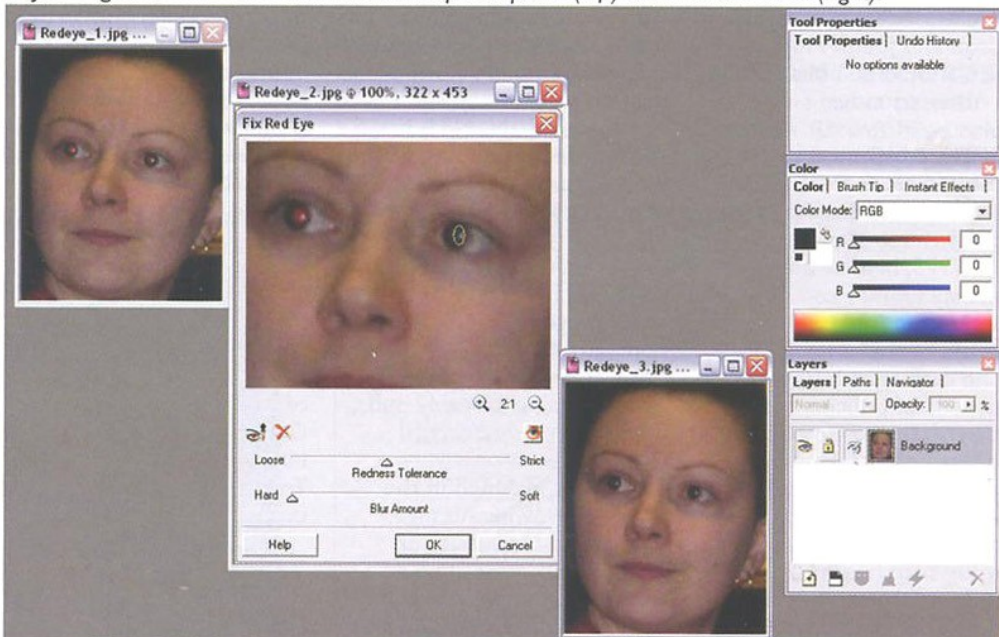
PhotoPlus comes with a useful 161-page manual, replicated as a PDF file on the program CD. You also get a resource CD which, if you elect for a full installation, will need 250Mbytes of hard disk space for its 3,000 'photo objects' and tutorials. Alternatively, you can choose a compact installation, which leaves most of the images on the CD (although they are slower to retrieve). You'll probably find the images of little

EDITING ADJUSTMENTS

Among the more useful tools are the ability to change contrast, brightness and colour balance, increase or decrease softness or sharpness, remove scratches and dust spots, and remove red-eye. Autocontrast and autolevel settings automate the sometimes complicated brightness, contrast and gamma-correction settings into a one-click simple operation, but finer adjustments may still be made manually. The scratch remover clones texture and colour from a clean source area to repair damaged areas.



Adjust brightness and contrast in an underexposed photo (left) to reveal the detail (right).



Take a photo exhibiting red-eye (left), apply correction to the right area (centre) and eliminate the red-eye for a more natural look (right).

relevance to your family history. There are more images available online although we weren't able to check this since the software couldn't find its server.

OVERVIEW

PhotoPlus v9 is a versatile photo-editing program that can be sophisticated yet easy to use. It compares well with the competition, especially the £76 *Paint Shop Pro* with which it shares some functionality.

As well as selective editing, its particular value to family historians is its ability to renovate old photos.

AVAILABILITY

You can buy *PhotoPlus v9* from many retail stores including PC World and Staples, or online from www.amazon.co.uk or www.dabs.com among others, or buy it direct from Serif at www.serif.co.uk or telephone 0800 376 7070, where it costs £79.99.

You'll need a Pentium class computer with SVGA (super video graphics array), 800x600, 16 bit colour or higher display, any Windows version from 98 to XP, 130Mbytes of hard drive space (around 400Mbytes if you want to install the images from the CD to your hard drive) and 64Mbytes RAM (random access memory), or more, to edit larger photos. ■



Use the extract tool to mark the image area of interest and 'cut it out' to use elsewhere.

ZOOM AND CROP

The extract command on the edit menu simplifies the task of isolating one part of an image. You simply brush an outline around the edges of a region you want to extract from the rest of the image, and then mark a foreground area to be retained inside the outline. *PhotoPlus* applies sophisticated edge detection within the marked edge band, decides which pixels to keep, and turns the rest transparent with variable blending along the edge. Fine-tune and reapply the extraction settings, to touch up the image manually until the result is just right.

The background eraser does a similar job and the clone tool, used for scratch removal, erases background features to isolate the desired foreground object.

You can also, of course, enlarge or reduce your photo's size to fit your album or web pages without losing too much quality. Cropping your photos eliminates unnecessary background, changes format and proportions, and allows you to concentrate on only part of an image. If you turned your camera for a portrait shot, it is possible to rotate the image to bring it upright.



Arrange your photos to minimise paper waste.

PDFs AND PRINTING

The new multiple image printing lets you choose a page layout and arrange your photos in the order you want to print them, although this is without captions or titles. When you print a single image, the position and size of the image on the page can be chosen. *PhotoPlus v9* now lets you export your photos as PDF (portable document format) files to send to your relatives on CD or by email - compressed, encrypted and password protected, if you choose. There's a copy of *Acrobat Reader* on the resources CD. PDF files can be uploaded to your web pages. *PhotoPlus* will also create or edit animations for the web, letting you import and export animated GIFs (graphics interchange format), and apply special effects.



Although you get 3,000 images on the resource CD you may find only a small percentage are usable.