

NEWSLETTER

March 2008



I have just invested in a new computer and I am in the process of installing all my software and files. It is a Vista Ultimate machine with an Intel Core2 Quad Q6600 processor, 4 GB of memory, 2 x 500GB hard drives, 2 x optical drives including one dual layer Light scribe DVD burner. It also has an Nvidia Geforce 8500GT video card. I think it is a very good machine and so far it has performed up to my expectations. I have had a couple of hiccups with Vista, mostly due to third party conflicts rather than anything Microsoft has done but nothing that couldn't be solved. I am waiting for Adobe Creative Suite 3, Web Premium Edition (\$1599 full, \$490 upgrade) to arrive to really get things going! I have also invested in a new 22" monitor so I hope my spending is over for a while!

Great Panoramas

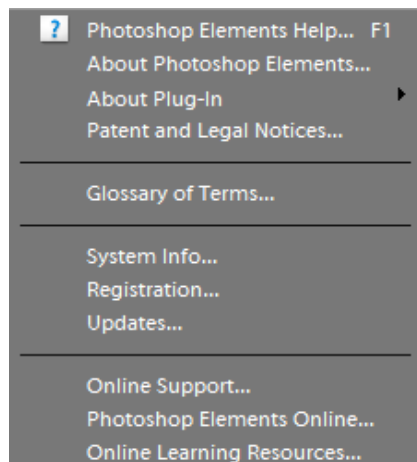
There is a web site www.panoramas.dk/ you must visit. It has the most stunning panorama presentations I have ever seen. Using wonderful photography and the Quick Time Player (a free download) the developers have created some amazing pictures that you can control for 360° viewing and zooming in and out. This Snagit screen capture of a portion of the Yokohama by night feature does not do justice to the site.



The site is the work of Hans Nyberg, a Danish commercial photographer. I have recently acquired a 22" wide screen monitor and watching these pictures unfold has a tremendous WOW! factor. There are lots of scenes from all over the globe (including San Francisco) and it can become addictive!

Photoshop Elements 6

We have had the latest version out for about five months so what is the verdict? There are some improvements in the organizer which are good but as many of you don't use this feature it is a moot point.



Probably the most annoying is the lack of assistance in house. This is a bug and does not apply to all installations! In my case when you click on help the drop down menu shown on the left appears but unfortunately clicking on the top item (or F1) produces nothing, the nearest thing to the old help feature in previous editions is found under "Glossary of Terms". The online Support and Photoshop Elements on line are grimly comical in their confusion and misinformation. You could contact Adobe but they want \$29 per support call! Downloading the PDF manual can be done from the web site which is probably the best method. I think it is summed up best by this quote I found on an Adobe forum for Elements 6:

QUOTE

I fully agree that a working program Help can be quite useful and is expected by most users. But I think you'll be wasting your time trying to get PSE 6 Help working. Even if you successfully get Help installed, it will be missing a large amount of basic content about how to use even elementary features of the program, and you won't find it very helpful. See below (**Here the writer refers to a list of over 60% of the programs features**) for a partial listing of the topics that are missing. Even new features such as the Magic Extractor, the new Photomerge, and the new panoramas, are undocumented in the installed help.

The PSE 6 Readme euphemistically alludes to this: "The Help system installs Help topics that can be searched from within the program. If you are connected to the web, **even more information** is available in the web version of Photoshop Elements Help."

That's a howler -- "even more information" means "most of the basic information you expect from a Help system".

UNQUOTE

Another thing which I dislike is the color scheme. The dark brown makes tools and menus very hard to read, check out this picture of the type menu bar:

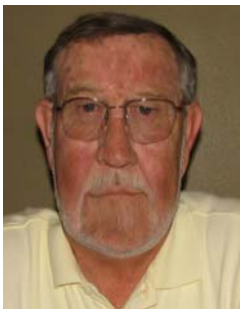


It maybe easy to read for young people but I find it barely legible.

The biggest change in the editing is the inclusion of a third editing mode, Guided, which joins the Full edit and Quick edit modes of previous versions. Guided mode provides you with detailed instruction while dividing key tasks (such as altering light levels) into easy pieces, to get you making changes even more quickly than before. Experienced users will appreciate the new tools in the Photomerge family. You can easily combine photos (place your son's eyes on your daughter's face!), recreate perfection that cameras can't capture (Photomerge Panorama is a super-smart way to combine multiple smaller photos into a seamless image), or create perfection that never existed in the first place (easily steal the best parts of two or more images to make a flawless composite, without even having to think about layers). It appears that Adobe has finally got the panorama feature right and the results from my tests appear good.

I think it is a good upgrade for people who have versions 3 and 4 (and good eyesight) but for those of you who have elements 5 it may be prudent to wait until the next version (look for it around November 2008) unless the urge to have a panorama tool that finally works is irresistible! For those of you who have already purchased this version make sure you let Adobe know what you like or dislike

Free Photo Stuff



I have mentioned at several SIG meetings the free downloads from www.vicman.net . This is a great site for many basic tools such as red eye correction but it also has a Batch Auto Correction program for correcting the same problem in several pictures at once such as contrast or color corrections due to low light. They also have a couple of photo albums, one for creating albums for posting on the web and another for creating three dimensional albums from your own collection. My favorite however is "Cartoonist." This works in a similar fashion to the Filter>distort>liquify in Elements but is easier to perform.

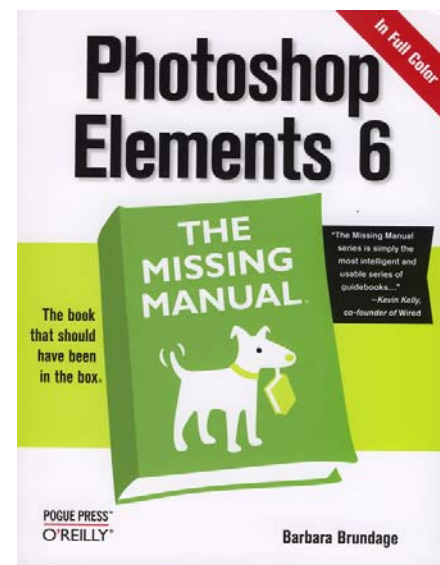
An example is shown here, I never understand why people ask me "Why the long face?"

All of the programs are free and easy to download.

Book Review

PhotoShop Elements 6, The Missing Manual By Barbara Brundage, O'Reilly Press

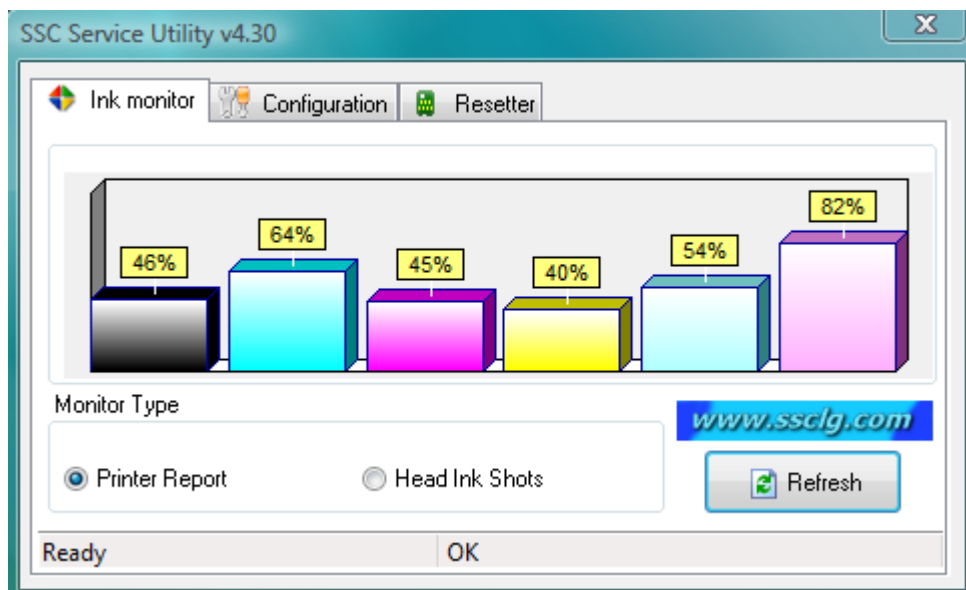
I have mentioned this book at one of our monthly meetings and I have put up a review on my web site however for those of you who have just purchased Elements 6 and might be thinking about a help book here is my take. If you have Missing manual for Elements 5 give this a miss. The additional material is mostly concerned with changes/improvements to the organizer. The meat of the book regarding editing is



virtually unchanged from the Elements 5 edition, even the pictures are the same. This was done previously with the Elements 3 and Elements 4 Missing Manual books, the changes are at best cosmetic. I am a fan of the Missing manual series but this recycling just to have a new edition is not acceptable. So if you have the Elements 5 book give this a miss, if you are updating from Elements 3 or 4 then this book will certainly be very useful.

Printer Ink Monitor

I can't remember the number of times the ink monitor on my printer has given me notice to change the ink cartridge as it is about to run out and I have continued to use it for another



couple of months! I seem to remember reading somewhere that these warnings come up when the ink level gets down to 20% which I regard as plenty. I always have spare cartridges on hand so if I run out it is no big deal. Now however there is a free monitor for Epson printers which shows the ink left in each cartridge and it is easy to schedule the cartridge change. Unfortunately this is only for Epson

printers but to download and run this free utility go to www.ssslq.com. They have virtually all of the Epson printers listed (shown is the Epson Stylus Photo R220) and it is easy to download and install.

Free Digital Photography Magazine

I came across a new free on line photography magazine recently called PhotographyBB on line magazine. There are some very interesting articles and it is in PDF format and free to download. If you are interested go to: <http://www.photographybb.com/>

This site also has a lot of interesting articles and tutorials as well as links to even more information.

Photoshop Tutorials

Here is a web site which is a contest site for Photoshop the full blown version. There are lots of very interesting pictures from contests and a section of royalty free downloads. There are also a lot of tutorials (some as videos) which are very good. Don't be put off by the fact that they are for Photoshop, a lot of the tutorials are easily adapted for Elements.

Go to <http://www.photoshoptalent.com/>. Membership is free and it is well worth the visit.

Other Free Stuff

You probably know I love to find unusual web sites and especially when they offer something free. I have compiled a list of sites which offer lots of things you probably don't want or need but you will go to them anyway!

Space Pictures:

Amazing pictures from outer space including some composite images. Go to: <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html> for the daily picture and do not miss the earth at night in the archive file.

Conversions:

Ever wondered how to convert Roman Numerals to today's system, or light years to miles (fyg 1 light-year = 5,874,601,673,407.301 miles) or anything in between go to: <http://www.onlineconversion.com/>

Phone Number Speller:

Ever wanted a telephone number such as: 1-800-IMGREAT? Well you may have an interesting number go to: <http://www.phonespell.org/phoneSpell.html> and find out.

Finally a web site from England for problem solving:

The Register:

For technical information on just about anything relating to computing go to: <http://www.theregister.co.uk/> if it isn't here it probably doesn't exist.

I hope you find something useful amongst them.

Well that is all for this newsletter, remember if you have anything to share, whether it be a picture, web site or anything of interest send it to me at elements@bkbrown.net and I will include it in a newsletter.