

NEWSLETTER

March 2009



The Best Pictures of 2008

Another year is already nearly 25% over! Continuing the tradition of putting articles that have nothing to do with Photoshop Elements in the Elements SIG newsletter here is a great site. You might remember I mentioned "The Big Picture" feature of boston.com in the December 2008 newsletter. They have come out with a selection of the best pictures of 2008 which are quite amazing. To view them click [here](#) or go to:

http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2008/12/the_year_2008_in_photographs_p.html

New Tutorial

With the proliferation of web based photo albums, "Flickr", "SmugMug" "PhotoBucket" to name but a few it seems that a lot of people are putting images on the web for everyone to see. I have nothing against this idea, in fact it makes a lot of sense for sharing photographs with friends and relatives but it seems many people are uploading pictures that are either way too large dimensionally or the file size is such that downloading takes forever. To help make your images a good fit for the sites I have created a new tutorial "**Savings Images for the Web**" which is now posted on the tutorial page of my web site. I hope this will help. Remember any comments or questions are welcome.

Photobucket et al

As I have mentioned this site above I thought I should give some details about it. You can access the site at: www.photobucket.com .

You can use it for simple photo sharing with family. It's widely used to add photos to discussion boards. And if you have a blog, image hosting can save you a lot of space. This product offers 1 gigabyte of space for a free account. It also allows you 10 gigabytes (10,000 MB) of bandwidth every month.

You can also upload videos to the site and best of all it is free!

Pictid

If you want to look around the world then Pictid is for you. Pictid is a social media community where users can visually explore spots of interest around the world. Pictid lets you upload, view, and share photos/videos of popular nightlife, restaurants, cafes, hotels, universities, and touristic attractions in any city or country. If it's not there already, you can add it yourself, no matter where it is.

It is quite interesting especially if you have already visited some of the spots some time ago, take a look at them now! It is free and still in beta but well worth a look. www.pictid.com

Computer Protection

I know this has nothing to do with Elements but again I think it may be of interest to many of you. We all take precautions against virus attacks, malware etc and I am sure that many of you have had problems with the registry in Windows. I personally have been using AVG antivirus, it seems to do the job fine and the price is great-FREE. For registry clean up I have used RegSupreme in the past which at about \$12 is a great product. However I stumbled across a new series of products by a company called "Comodo". My first thought was it was a bathroom product but after reading all the blurbs about them and doing research on some of the web forums I trust I found that they put out a great series of products for the general public covering antivirus, malware protection, firewall and a registry cleaner. I checked with our resident "wise man" Ron who advised me that although he wasn't familiar with the products I have mentioned he did know of Comodo in the corporate world and that they had an excellent reputation. I have downloaded and installed their registry cleaner, firewall and BoClean a program for detecting and removing root kits, hijackers, key loggers and Trojans on both my desktop and laptop computers. It has worked very well and I think it is well worth checking out. Full details and downloads can be found at: http://www.comodo.com/products/free_products.html

Photo Optimizer 3

AShampoo a German software company has many odd ball software programs on the market plus some quite useful products which are very reasonably priced. I have purchased several programs from them over the last couple of years and one which is very useful is Photo Optimizer 3. This is a basic image enhancer featuring

- Instant Optimize function enhances colors and vibrancy
- Select and click red eye removal
- One-click image rotation
- Convert to black-and-white, sepia and inverted
- Easy brightness and contrast sliders
- Automatic backup: all edits reversible at any time
- Explorer view doubles as a quick image viewer

The list price for this is \$14.99 but they sent me an e-mail offering it for \$7.99 or going to the web site area called "make an offer" where you can put in any price you think will fly and if they

accept your price the software is yours. I exercised this option and offered \$6 which they accepted. If you want a program that is very easy to use and gives some remarkable results I strongly recommend this. It is also an excellent gift for someone who takes pictures but is not into Photoshop Elements or any other more complex program. As an example I am showing a picture of my very elderly aunt in England (I would mention her age but she would shoot me!) I received via e-mail at Christmas time which was not very good but using the "instant optimize" feature produced quite an acceptable image.

Before instant optimization



After instant optimization



Tiltshift Maker

I stumbled across this program the other day and spent quite some time playing with it. I am not quite sure where the name is derived but it is quite a clever little freebie.

Tiltshift miniature style photos are pictures of real-life scenes that are manipulated to look like model photographs. Now you can easily transform your existing digital camera photos into tilt-shift style miniatures using Tiltshift Maker.

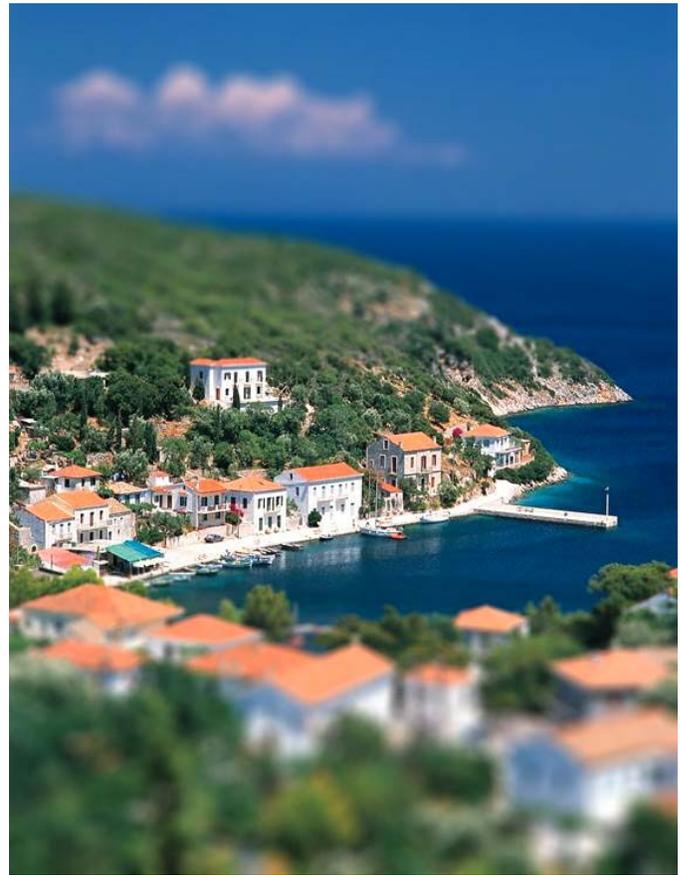
You don't have to register for an account, and the service is free. Keep in mind that some photos will work better than others, depending on what is in the pictures and how they were taken. Your best bet if you're not familiar with Tilt-Shift Photography is to just play around with several photos, until you get the hang of what works - and what doesn't.

You can find the program at: <http://tiltshiftmaker.com/>

I happened to have a picture which was similar to the example shown on the web site so I uploaded it and tried the program. The result was quite interesting as shown below.



BEFORE



AFTER

Shape Collage 2

Yet another free program I discovered on the web.

<http://www.vincentcheung.ca/shapecollage/>

This is the brain child of Vincent Cheung a very clever young man who is pursuing a doctorate degree in computer engineering in Canada. The premise is to take a series of images and arrange them into a collage. There is a choice of shapes including customizing your own.

Shape Collage uses a very simple and fast machine learning algorithm to arrange the photos in the collage. It's not perfect, but it does a pretty good job.

I downloaded the program on Valentine's Day so I thought it was appropriate to take some images of roses and turn them into a heart.

The result is shown below.



Words of Wisdom

SIG member Lyn Oakleaf subscribes to a lot of image manipulation web sites and magazines and frequently forwards to me words of wisdom from some of these. Recently he sent the following from PCPhoto which I think should be read by all of us.

Five Things to Never Do with Photoshop

The old adage “never say never” is often appropriate in life, but when it comes to digital imaging there are certain things you should never do. Be it for reasons of bad karma or bad technical results, take heed these warnings, friend. There are some things you should never, ever, ever do with Photoshop.

1. NEVER click a funky filter and assume the outcome will be unique. Just because it's new to you doesn't make it new; imagine how infatuated a caveman would be with even the worst show on television. Every digital photographer experienced a honeymoon phase when we first started working with computers, and we looked at all those weird and wacky filters and the wild results they produced and felt like we couldn't go wrong. But we did. Thankfully, we eventually grew out of it. Even better is to never grow into the habit in the first place. Skip the "one-stop-shop" filter effects and remember that they're better served as a subtle part of the whole equation. Running a photo of Angelina Jolie through the Emboss filter isn't going to make it art. It will just make an ugly picture of Angelina Jolie. Trust us. Don't do it.

2. NEVER sharpen an image before you work on it. This is especially true if you'll be resizing the image in later steps, or if you're only doing one-step sharpening. Many photographers apply a subtle sharpening—often during the RAW conversion—before working on the image. That's fine, as long as it's not the only sharpening to be done. Because resizing affects sharpness, and because every other modification you make to an image will affect the perceived sharpness, it's always best to save the sharpening until the last step of the process before saving a file. When you sharpen, you create (along with the positive sharpening effect you intend) little artefacts from the process. When sharpening is the last step—i.e. sharpening for the specified output—you're able to use your eyes to verify that artefacts are minimized and the correct sharpness is applied.

3. NEVER work on the only version of an original file. Make a copy, and don't wait until it's too late! It only takes one accidental Ctrl-S and Ctrl-W combo (saving and then closing—throwing away the undoable abilities of the history menu) to make this one sink in for good. When you're working on the only version of your high-resolution 40-megapixel file and you make the web-sized version, save and close, and then realize that you've gone from 40-million pixels to 40 pixels... ouch. (Along with that, don't forget to save often as you go, and always back up those files too. No matter how tempting the space-saving may be, never save originals as anything other than a lossless TIF, PSD or RAW file format like DNG.)

4. NEVER downsize an image (for emailing or anything else) before you fix it up. It can be tempting to resize first to make the edits go faster, but you need to think of an original, maximum-resolution file as your digital negative. For the entire history of the medium photographers clamoured for the largest negatives they could get, and the same is true for digital files. All edits should be done on a file that can be downsized later. After all, you can always make a big file smaller, but you can't make a small file much bigger without destroying the quality. Since so much computer processing is all about eliminating extra steps, remember that it's easy to shrink an image but not to expand it. Always work on a high-res file knowing that you can easily shrink it later.

5. NEVER destroy a beautiful image with an ugly watermark. If you're a high-paid photographic master whose images are really in demand, I can understand your hesitation to post a high-res file unprotected online. But there are so many better ways than obliterating a beautiful image with a trashy watermark or logo—particularly if it's only a web-res file. Not only do obnoxious watermarks make your photos look bad, they make you look obnoxious too—like you're more afraid of someone stealing your precious photo than you are interested in showing it to the rest of us. The point is simply to be smart and protect your work within reason. Include important information in the metadata, and even run a copyright notice across a portion of the picture if you'd like. But completely ruining an otherwise lovely landscape with a tacky logo? That's a real travesty.

I think these are very important especially points 3 and 4. In view of the new tutorial on “Saving Pictures for the Web” remember point 4.

Well that is about all for this newsletter, remember I am always looking for articles and news to share so don't be shy about sending something for publication.



CATFISH!