

Software *round-up*

This month's once-over features portrait enhancing software from Anthropics and two new applications from the Alien Skin stable...

Portrait Professional v.10

Is this the world's most intelligent portrait enhancing software?

We've all taken portrait shots that, on closer inspection, end up looking less than perfect. And that's exactly where Portrait Professional comes into action. This software application is trained in human beauty and it's pretty easy to use too. It works having analysed thousands of images in order to determine what makes people attractive or unattractive.

So, for example, if your hapless subject has an unsightly double chin then Portrait Professional can get that seen to thanks to its 'jaw slider' command. A collection of over 200 assorted sliders allow you to manage just about any kind of facial aberration, while it's also possible to sort out problem hair too. The natty thing about Portrait Professional, now in its tenth version, is that the software keeps on learning via frequent updates. That's all well and good, but does it live up to expectations? Actually yes, the options here are easy to use and produce excellent results.

There are tools that automatically eliminate skin blemishes such as spots and pimples, leaving great looking skin after you've given it a once over. Different shooting conditions often reveal embarrassing or unsightly facial issues such as grease and sweat, but with a click or two they can be dispatched with ease. Wrinkles, lines and other problem areas can be similarly dealt with to very good effect.

New look

We also like the way that it's possible to carry out some straightforward digital plastic surgery. With a little bit of practise it's possible to deftly reshape different parts of the face in order to offer a more flattering image. Shadows and other unflattering elements can also be tweaked and enhanced to make a substandard portrait into a completely different image.

Other makeover tools allow quick and easy revision of eye colour or off-white teeth while hair can be made to look thick and lustrous again with the minimum of effort from the user. Although the tools found inside Portrait Professional are relatively easy to operate, they're



certainly powerful.

The standalone version delivers all of the effects we've mentioned but does not include the Photoshop plug-in 'batch mode' productivity features or RAW file support that professional and semiprofessional photographers require. Opt for the Portrait Professional Studio version though and it can be used as a standalone application or work in tandem with Lightroom or Photoshop as a plug-in, as well as offering the capacity for working directly with RAW files. High-end users should plump for the Portrait Professional Studio 64 package, which is optimised for maximum performance on computers running 64-bit operating systems. This edition packs an extra punch for people who are working with enormous files, and runs like a dream.

We had great fun working with the ClearSkin 2 skin defect removal and regeneration tools, producing some really impressive effects that thankfully looked very natural. Many editing programs that offer skin restoration often miss the mark by a long shot. Here though, the effects were impressive without doubt. What's more, you don't have to be a Photoshop wizard to get top results either. DPE readers can claim an extra 10% online discount when they use the code dpetest. A free trial is also available.

Price: Portrait Professional v.10: normal price £64.95, special launch price £29.95. Portrait Professional Studio: normal price £109.95, special launch price £49.95. Portrait Professional Studio 64: normal price £159.95, special launch price £79.95 for a limited period.

Web: www.portraitprofessional.com

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PC: Windows 7, Windows Vista, Windows XP or Windows 2000, 1Ghz CPU or better, minimum 512MB RAM XP, 1GB RAM Vista. Mac: OSX 10.4 or later, Intel CPU 1Ghz or better, 512MB RAM or more.

VERDICT

There's a version of Portrait Professional that will suit just about any level of user and version 10 is the best incarnation to date. We found that it was easy to use, highly intuitive and new features including the ClearSkin option, plus intelligent skin defect and removal brushes are all highly potent tools. There's also an excellent interface that makes the experience a positive one. It makes tricky editing fun too.

Total ★★★★★★★★★★