

Photo retouching tool

Portrait Professional 10 Studio Edition



Price £110 (£91 ex VAT)

Contact Anthropics
+ portraitprofessional.com

Needs Mac OS X 10.4 or later

Pros Results + Ease of use + Manual control + Spot removal + Plug-in options

Cons Some clunky layout and preference choices

Verdict Remarkable retouching software that makes the process pain free. No new killer features, though.

Anthropics' **Portrait Professional** is a largely automated retouching utility that, within a few quick steps, analyses your sitter's face and applies myriad enhancements, subtly reshaping the facial features, removing blemishes and wrinkles, and smoothing skin. While all this can be achieved in Photoshop, and to a lesser degree in Lightroom and Aperture, the result is always extraordinary. If the defaults aren't quite how you envisaged, though – and they will be for all but the most particular of professional users – you can always fine-tune the process after it has done its thing.

A number of features have been added in version 10. The clever algorithms behind the facial reshaping features have been updated and include a learning algorithm, continually adjusting and enhancing attractiveness. A new proprietary skin enhancement technology, ClearSkin, analyses blemishes and wrinkles, and adopts an automated cloning function based on real skin texture.

These features work behind the scenes, but there are more immediately apparent improvements to Studio 10. Although it works as a standalone utility, Studio 10 has Raw file support courtesy of the respected dcrw



▲ *Portrait Professional continues to impress with its ease of use and excellent quality of results.*

Raw conversion utility. It's now implemented as a plug-in so it can be updated regularly or when support for new cameras is announced, not unlike ACR. Studio now works as a plug-in for Aperture, adding to the plug-ins already available for both Photoshop and Lightroom.

The setup process has been simplified, too: you only need to navigate to Studio's Preferences dialog to add them with a click of a button. Unfortunately, though, you'll need to specify Studio as an external editor for Lightroom, as you can't add it from Lightroom's built-in plug-in manager.

While you're there, it's worth checking over the Preferences settings, as some of the new features aren't enabled by default. A 'Skip to the final step' option, bypassing the individual facial mapping and shaping features, could be easily overlooked, as could the 'Enhance Skin only' setting, both time-saving features if your sitters haven't been bestowed with supermodel looks from birth.

Another option worthy of attention is how Studio handles bit depth and colour management, both crucial features to pro-image makers. Again, somewhat oddly, the default setting adopts 8-bit colour internally and there's no option to work in the ProPhoto colour space. However, the default 'use profile from picture' setting will allow you to use that particular profile if you're coming from an external editor. However, with no on-screen

warnings or reminders, these important priorities could easily be overlooked – a niggling shortcoming when working in standalone mode.

The new interface is a welcome addition, though. The darker grey workspace is a plus for improved colour perception, but the no-frills Windows-like feel remains. Although there has been Mac compatibility from

version 8, there's still only limited support for commands such as swiping, meaning while the sliders can be tweaked easily enough, the size and weighting of the Touch up and Restore brushes can't be adjusted without interruption of another step. Further, the brushes are located at the top of the window; while you can't miss them, it would have made more sense if they were a part of the Tool palette.

We can't criticise their performance, though: the Touch up brush, for example, is much more effective in use than Aperture's Retouch and Lightroom's Spot removal options, making the process swifter,

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practically care-free and with more lifelike texture. Additional face sculpting sliders allow greater control over shape of the face, as well as the length of the nose and shape of the eyes; if you like the exaggerated anime-style Lady Gaga look, it's just a slider away.

Presets were introduced with version 8, greatly expanded in 9 and added to and revamped in version 10, enabling you to quickly adjust facial features, lighten or colour hair, brighten and adjust eye colour, and even change from colour to mono. It's also handy for giving a balanced look to the enhancements of a series of images, something the batch mode doesn't do in so far as it only helps load one image to the next. What's lacking, however, are effective solutions for removing stray hair and altering the colour of the roots, something that's quite common with retouching.

While it's good to see Anthropics adding much-needed options and enhancements, there are no new killer features. That perhaps reflects the fact that this is a mature product, and the results speak for themselves.

Kevin Carter



▲ *You can save your effects as Sliders so you can apply them to other images.*