Helpdesk

Our Photoshop expert tackles your image-editing traumas and puts you back on track BY **JULIE EASTON**

NEW PRESETS

I've got some new brushes that I want to load and save. I know how to do this, but can I make a new 'folder' or whatever they're called so I know where these are? You know, there are 'basic brushes', 'wet media brushes', etc… I want a new one of those. I had some beautiful brushes loaded before, but I'm not sure if I saved them. They were always available anyway. Then one day, I loaded a new set and lost all my own brushes. Nowhere to be found, and I don't know where I got them from either. I don't want that to happen again. Any ideas?
Lorraine, via the forum

It is indeed possible to save your brushes into a folder, otherwise known as a Preset. First make sure that your brushes are loaded into Photoshop in the usual manner. Next, go to Edit>Preset Manager. Select the brushes that you want to save into a Preset (use Shift to select continuous brushes, or hold down Cmd (Mac)/Ctrl (PC) in order to select brushes individually). Click on Save Set and name your new Preset. You need to save this in the Brushes Presets folder, which on a Mac can be found in Applications>Adobe Photoshop>Presets>Brushes. When you have done this, quit Photoshop and reload. Now when you open the Brushes palette you'll see your new Preset.

BRUSHES: *You can save brush sets as new Presets in order to make them easier to find*

ORGANISED MESS

Being a designer, organisation is not one of my strongest assets. I have hundreds of projects on my PC that are complete and archived on a separate hard drive, but they are in no order and I have to search through all of them one by one if I want to find a specific project. I know that programs such as Apple's Aperture are out there for cataloguing images, but that's a little pricey for my needs. I really want a cheaper program that will just let me add keywords which I can search through.
Charlie Jameson

With more people keeping digital artwork and photographs on their computers in bulk, image-cataloguing software is a booming sector. As you say, Apple's Aperture is one such program, but because of its price and advanced features, it's really for professional users who need to keep a handle on many thousands of images. Lightroom from Adobe will cover pretty much the same audience when it's released.

That leaves the countless shareware and pay-for programs that are available for people like you who just want a simple way of searching through a reasonable number of images.

LIGHTING TUTORIALS

I want to work on some really focused spot lighting, moody lighting and any other effects which create some tension and almost a feeling of helplessness. I thought about a bit of noise, but the lighting keeps coming back to me. Any good tutorials on creating such an atmosphere?
M. Barnes, on the forum

This question was posted on the *Advanced Photoshop* forum. Trinity-of-one recommends investing in a book called *Creative Photoshop Lighting Techniques*, which can be found at **www.ilex-press.com** or on Amazon. We think this is great advice, as the book is packed full of useful tips and techniques. We'd also recommend taking a look at **www.tutorio.com/lighting-tutorials2.html**, where there are plenty of tutorials covering many different lighting effects. Of course, keep reading *AP* for some great tips and techniques on making the most of Photoshop.

GET ORGANISED: *Free programs like Google's Picasa can help you keep on top of an unruly graphics collection*

One option you might want to try is Google's Picasa, from **http://picasa.google.com**. It's completely free and enables you to simply sort through your graphics files and add keywords for searching.

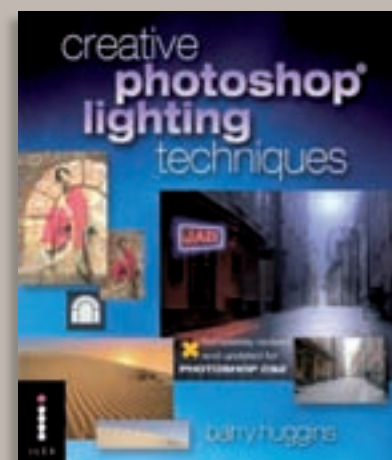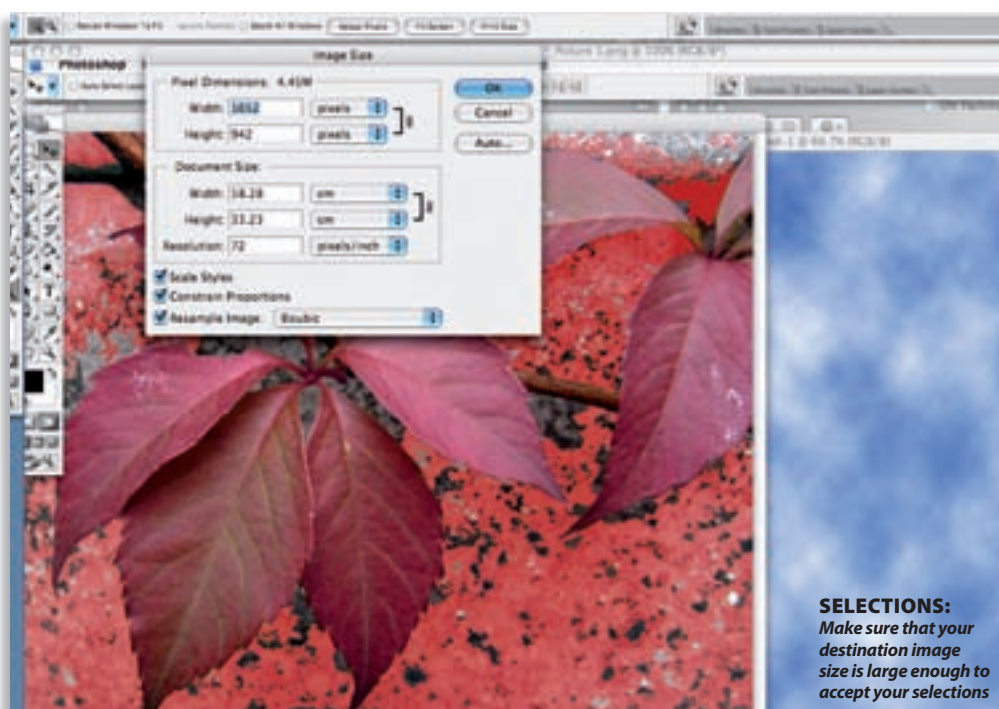Another option is Smartpix Manager, from **www.xequte.com/smartpix**, which will add automatic keywords such as words within the filename or the date, and recognises Photoshop-embedded information.

CREATE A MOOD: Creative Photoshop Lighting Techniques *is a great book for helping you get to grips with lighting in Photoshop*

SELECTIONS:
Make sure that your destination image size is large enough to accept your selections

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT WHEN YOU APPLY A MASK, IT'S SPECIFIC TO THAT POSITION AND SIZING"

KEEP IT CRISP

Hope you can help! I have done a quick mask over an object in an image and I want to drag that selection onto a coloured background in a separate document. However, when I try and drag the selection from one image to the other it goes 'foggy' and soft around the edges. What am I doing wrong and how can I keep the crisp sharpness of the original in transit?
Sophie Lewis

You need to check the setup of the document that you are dragging the selection to. If it's too small or set up with the wrong colourspace, then you'll find the selection does not match its new background. Use the Image Size command to ensure that the destination is big enough to accept the selection you are moving. It's important to remember that when you apply a mask it is specific to that position and sizing.

WINDOW SCALE

I've recently transferred from PC to Mac and something is bugging me. Whenever I zoom in and out of a canvas the window alters size. This is very frustrating. Is this a Mac thing or can I stop this from happening?
Andrew Leyton

This is an easy problem to solve, Andrew. With Photoshop open click on Photoshop>Preferences>General and unselect the option 'Zoom Resizes Window'. *Et voila!*

You are also able to add your own metadata for a more personalised method of searching.

A search on Google for image-cataloguing software will bring up a wide range of other options as well.

HOT STUFF

I do a lot of creative photography and I'm worried that my camera needs replacing. I took a picture at about one-second exposure with the lens cap on to check for hot pixels – there were roughly 25. Is this a fault with the camera, or is that about right?
Ted Dance

It really depends upon the severity of the pixels and what kind of photography you do. If you take a picture with the lens cap on, you won't get a jet-black image. The sensors on the CCD all record something, and you are likely to see all manner of colours if you zoom right in on the pixels.

They should only be very dim however, and only noticeable if you put the ISO as high as it will go. If the pixels you can see are bright white, then this could indicate a faulty camera. It's not unusual to have a few pixels off in an image, and they can be white, a dull red or a blue colour. Usually a few of these won't be noticeable across a bright and colourful image, but if you do a lot of low-light imagery, then your 25 pixels could become a problem. If this is the case, you might need to invest in a new camera.

DESKTOP DESIGNS

Graphic design has always been more of a hobby for me than anything else, but I have decided that I might like to take it further. I love creating funky desktops and icon packages for computer systems, and I was wondering if there are any good websites that I can submit work to. This appeals to me more than anything too commercially focused, as I want to keep my day job too!
Tim Burling

There are plenty of sites out there that enable you to submit your own customised desktops for computers, but most of these are open to everyone and your masterpiece will just get lost in the thousands of options available. Instead, it would be better to offer your services to design-based companies that offer high-quality and bespoke desktops. Check out www.pixelgirlpresents.com, where you can email the company to enquire about working for them. The website also links to a number of other design-based sites which are concerned with creating desktops and icon packages.

GETTING STARTED: *Pixelgirlpresents.com is a great place to start if you're looking for design commissions, with an email link to its sister company Morfia Design*

mon itors

With lower prices and improved quality, you owe it to your eyes to invest in a good flat-panel display

MONITORS

The monitor is one of the most important parts of a computer system, yet it is often overlooked in favour of extra memory or a more powerful processor. However, for graphics and design work there's nothing that'll give you greater enjoyment or better results than upgrading to an enormous, sparkling new monitor.

As well as vastly improved image quality, the larger viewable area and higher resolution allows you to fit more on the screen, so even high resolution photos and graphics can be viewed at 100% with room to spare for Photoshop toolbars. If you don't have access to a separate monitor specifically dedicated to housing palettes and toolbars, these can really get in the way unless you have plenty of space to push them to one side, leaving room for your main canvas.

Just like televisions, computer monitors are available in both standard (4:3) and widescreen ratios, with the latter becoming more commonplace now the prices of flat-panels are so low. The latest widescreen monitors are particularly well suited to designers. The wide

viewing angle is a more natural shape and allows you to keep toolbars and other applications either side, while images are centred, and the largest displays offer resolutions far higher than those found in standard 4:3 ratio monitors. There are plenty of wide graphics tablets available from www.wacom.com that will give you the flexibility to sync up your tablet to your widescreen monitor. Many widescreen models can also be swivelled to make the display stand on end, which can be useful for tall images such as intricate portraits as well as long websites and documents.

For graphics work, the resolution, contrast ratio, brightness and size of a display are the most important specifications to consider. On 4:3 monitors you won't get anything more than 1600 x

1200 resolution, which is found only on those with a 20-inch viewable area. Widescreen displays with a 23 or 24-inch diagonal area will have resolutions of 1920 x 1600, while the larger 30-inch monitors can handle an imposing 2560 x 1600.

In short, this means that the larger monitors will give you far more scope for displaying higher-res images, and this will give you plenty more opportunities to work on heavily detailed images in Photoshop. For the best results you need high contrast ratio and brightness for the most accurate colour reproduction. Keep in mind however, that the larger a monitor the more demanding it is on your graphics card. In particular, 30-inch displays require a graphics card which is dual-link capable, something that is standard on most new cards.

" FOR GRAPHICS AND DESIGN WORK, NOTHING WILL GIVE YOU BETTER RESULTS THAN AN ENORMOUS NEW MONITOR "

Dell

Web: www.dell.co.uk
Contact: www.dell.co.uk

For a company that mainly deals in cheap, pre-built home computers, Dell's monitors are highly regarded by designers, gamers and other power users who normally wouldn't touch anything carrying the Dell logo. Its prices are some of the most competitive and you'd expect the low cost to affect the quality of the displays, but it's quite the opposite. While Dell's standard 4:3 ratio 19 and 20-inch monitors are average, the fantastic widescreen displays really stand out. Its flagship 30-inch model is superior in every way to Apple's 30-inch cinema display and the lower-end 20.1 and 24-inch versions have yet to be bested, with excellent features, design and image quality at an unbeatable price. It's also worth noting that you can often get huge discounts on the prices listed on Dell's site. There are several reliable eBay resellers whose prices are way below those offered elsewhere, and Dell frequently offers money-off vouchers and special sales promotions.

3007WFP

Price: £1,365.35
Size: 30" wide
Resolution: 2560 x 1600
Response time: 14ms
Brightness: 400 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 700:1
Ports: DVI (HDCP)
Extras: USB hub, memory card reader, optional speakers

2007WFP

Price: £302.27
Size: 20.1" wide
Resolution: 1680 x 1050
Response time: 16ms
Brightness: 300 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 800:1
Ports: VGA, DVI, composite
Extras: USB hub, optional speakers

Jargon

Response time
The response time of a monitor refers to how long it takes the crystals inside the monitor to go from active to inactive to active. Measured in milliseconds, high response times result in visible artefacts ('ghosting') when displaying fast-moving images. Although there are now monitors with sub-10ms response times, anything under 20ms is sufficient to eliminate visible smearing.

Contrast ratio
This is the ratio of brightest and darkest colour that a monitor can manage. Low contrast ratios can result in desaturated colour and an inability to display true black – sometimes resulted in blurred text – so for the best results you obviously want the highest contrast ratio possible.

2407WFP

Price: £566.64
Size: 24" wide
Resolution: 1920 x 1200
Response time: 16ms
Brightness: 450 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 1000:1
Ports: VGA, DVI (HDCP), composite, component
Extras: USB hub, memory card reader, optional speakers

Sony

Web: www.sony.co.uk
Contact: http://shop.sonystyle-europe.com/

For such an enormous company, Sony's range of displays is really quite disappointing. Its largest flat-panel is the 23-inch SDM-P234, which comes off badly in comparison to models from competing manufacturers. First released in 2004, the SDM-P234 has basic specifications with no extras at all, and its image quality is distinctly average when compared with later models (which are also less expensive). These problems are compounded by an excessively high price which currently stands at more than double the cost of Dell's excellent 24-inch 2407WFP. Sony's standard 4:3 monitors are slightly better, because although generally more expensive than other brands, the excellent X-Black screens – which give the display a shiny appearance – have a fantastic image quality. Generally however, Sony monitors are overpriced with few extras and you can usually get a better deal elsewhere – although having said that, if you should happen to find one on sale it will certainly be worth your while considering it.

SDM-S205FS

Price: £549
Size: 20"
Resolution: 1600 x 1200
Response time: 16ms
Brightness: 300 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 700:1
Ports: 2x VGA, DVI
Extras: None

SDM-HS95PRB

Price: £389.99
Size: 19"
Resolution: 1280 x 1024
Response time: 8ms
Brightness: 420cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 550:1
Ports: VGA, DVI
Extras: None

Apple

Web: www.apple.com/uk
Contact: www.apple.com/uk

Apple only has three monitors in its range, the 20 to 30-inch Cinema displays. Aimed at designers, they feature the usual Apple styling and are easily the most attractive computer displays around. But once you've finished drooling over the svelte lines of Apple's displays and actually examined the specifications, it quickly becomes apparent that their performance and features do not match their price. While the image quality is fantastic, they're severely lacking in other areas. Contrast ratios, brightness and response times are distinctly average and they have little in the way of extra features. One glaring omission is the lack of any additional inputs and HDCP support. Despite being named 'cinema' displays they only include DVI ports and will not work with protected high-definition content; without component or composite sockets you can't view video from any other source, which is a real shame because they'd be perfect for high-def gaming and movies as well as design work. These negative points aren't likely to deter Apple purists, but anyone who's concerned about getting the best possible monitor for their money will be disappointed.

30-inch Cinema HD Display

Price: £1,549
Size: 30" wide
Resolution: 2560 x 1600
Response time: 14ms
Brightness: 400 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 700:1
Ports: DVI
Extras: USB & firewire hub

SDM-P234

Price: £1,299
Size: 23" wide
Resolution: 1920 x 1200
Response time: 16ms
Brightness: 300 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 600:1
Ports: 2x VGA, DVI
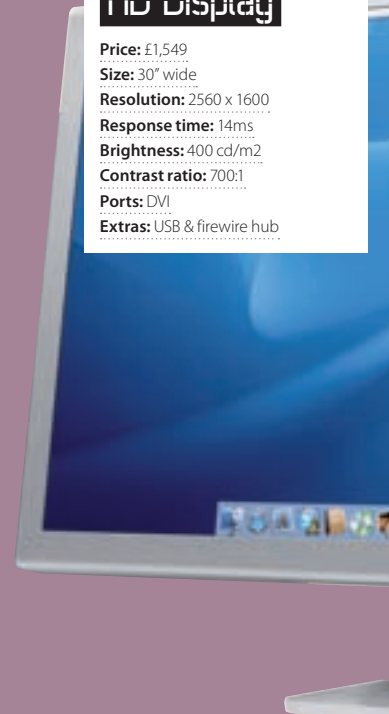**Extras:** Stereo input

VE510s

Price: £105.20
Size: 15"
Resolution: 1024 x 768
Response time: 16ms
Brightness: 250 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 450:1
Ports: VGA
Extras: None

VX1935wm

Price: £209.60
Size: 19"
Resolution: 1440 x 900
Response time: 5ms
Brightness: 300 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 700:1
Ports: VGA, DVI
Extras: Stereo input

Viewsonic

Web: www.viewsoniceurope.com **Contact:** www.savastore.com

Viewsonic has a massive range with something to suit every need, from dirt-cheap budget models to high-end professional gear. The products are split up into four ranges: the VA/VE, VG, VX and Pro series. VA and VE are budget products with display sizes between 15 and 20-inch widescreen, VG are higher performance models aimed at designers and gamers with 15 to 20-inch sizes, VX models are pricier with higher specifications yet again and a more stylish design, while the Pro series is obviously aimed at the most discerning buyer and includes a 23-inch widescreen model. If you need something very cheap without sacrificing quality, Viewsonic's VA and VE displays are among the best on the market. The differences between the other series in its range are not as pronounced, but the VX monitors do have very low response times and the 19-inch widescreen VX1935wm is good value for money. Dell continues to dominate the high-end widescreen market though, as Viewsonic's biggest display – the 23-inch wide VP2330wb – is close to double the price of the Dell 2407WFP and lacks any enticing extra features.

VP2330wb

Price: £936.29
Size: 23" wide
Resolution: 1920 x 1600
Response time: 16ms
Brightness: 250 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 800:1
Ports: VGA, DVI
Extras: USB hub

23-inch Cinema HD Display

Price: £779
Size: 23" wide
Resolution: 1920 x 1200
Response time: 14ms
Brightness: 400 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 700:1
Ports: DVI
Extras: USB & firewire hub

20-inch Cinema Display

Price: £529
Size: 20" wide
Resolution: 1680 x 1050
Response time: 14ms
Brightness: 400 cd/m2
Contrast ratio: 700:1
Ports: DVI
Extras: USB & firewire hub

> " VIEWSONIC HAS A MASSIVE RANGE, WITH SOMETHING FOR EVERY NEED "