

onOne PhotoTools Professional Edition

Quick imaging adjustments from within one program

Manufacturer: onOne Software
Web: www.ononesoftware.com
Price: £169.95
Req: Mac OS X 10.4.8 or higher (Universal Binary)
Windows XP SP2, Vista or higher (Microsoft .NET 2.0 or higher)
Photoshop CS2 (9.0.2), CS3
512MB RAM (1GB recommended)
OpenGL capable video card with 128MB VRAM (256MB recommended)
1,024 x 768 or higher
50MB disk space
Adobe Flash Player 9
Internet connection (for auto updates)

OnOne's Photoshop plug-ins have always been met with favour here at **Advanced Photoshop**. It was only back in issue 37 that we took a look at PhotoTune 2.2, giving it a respectable 4/5 score and commented on its ease of use and high-quality results. Well, the company is back again with another photographic-based plug-in that can really help you to enhance your images with the minimum of fuss: PhotoTools.

There are two versions of PhotoTools available: Standard and Professional. We took a look at the second of the two, as it has added functionality (around 100 extra effects), but if you don't use photographs in your work that often, then the Standard version uses the same interface at a lower cost.

A 30-day trial of the program is available from the onOne site (www.ononesoftware.com), so that you can see if the program is suitable for your use before purchasing, which is a

relief when you're paying out just under £170 for the plug-in package. The trial version functions in exactly the same way, but your image is watermarked when you output the result.

PhotoTools uses the power of Photoshop Actions to quickly automate a huge variety of effects and filters that can be used to enhance, correct, adjust and change the look of your photos. It couldn't be easier to use. Once installed, you'll find a new option appears in the main menu bar of Photoshop: OnOne. Here you can access the full program, or choose from a selection of the most popular presets for instant application.

Loading PhotoTools takes a few seconds, and you are presented with a helpful nine-page splash screen that walks you through using the program. You can tick the box to stop this loading every time you start the program, but it is useful at first. When the interface opens, it takes literally seconds to work your way around it. On the left are before and after previews of your image; on the right is a library of effects. Simply select an effect from the library – some will apply immediately, some will give you additional options – and click Apply. The effect is applied to the image quickly, updating the preview. The effect is then added to the Stack, and a Fade slider is used to change its opacity. You can add as many effects as you need on top of each other, and you can use the Stack list to reorder effects to suit.

You can save presets of your effect packages, so that they can be applied again with ease, and there is also a batch processing function to treat a number of images in one go. Overall, this is a program that really can help you save time and get great effects in seconds if you need to treat a lot of photographic images in one go. It isn't cheap, but you get a lot of functionality for your money. ■



TAKE YOUR PICK: The Professional Edition retails at just under £170, but there is also a Standard Edition available for less

Summary: A great tool for those who use a lot of photography and want to get the best out of their images in the quickest way possible.

Rating: **4/5**



SPLIT SCREEN: You can change Before/After windows from individual images to a split screen to better see the effect of the filters you apply

HELP: At launch this short help guide comes up. You can disable it, but it is useful to have the first time you open the program as it explains where to find everything you need



INTERFACE: The interface is similar to Lightroom, with a library of effects down the right of the screen. As you apply effects, they are added to the Stack, so that you can use multiple filters on one image



FREE ACCOUNT: You'll need to create an account with PhotoBox to order prints, but it takes minutes and you get 30 free standard prints on signing up

Readers' offer

PhotoBox, the UK's number one online digital photo storing, sharing and printing service, is offering **Advanced Photoshop** readers an exclusive opportunity to buy one get the second half price on 30 x 20" size photo prints. That's right, order one 30 x 20" print and get the second half price! Produce your favourite images on a bigger scale with PhotoBox! PhotoBox is obsessed with quality – all prints are produced in its own labs ensuring it maintains its high standards.

To take advantage of this great offer, sign up for free at www.photobox.co.uk/photoshop2 and follow the easy instructions to upload your work. Enter the offer code 'PHOTOSHOP30x20' as you go through the checkout. Offer ends 31 March 2008.



photobox

PhotoBox 30 x 20-inch prints

Go large with these printing options from PhotoBox

Manufacturer: PhotoBox

Web: www.photobox.co.uk

Price: From £9.50

Spec: 30 x 20" (76 x 51cm) prints

Available in gloss or matte finish

Price decreases as more prints are ordered

30 free prints on signing up to PhotoBox

Fast delivery

Most of our personal artworks are never seen in a tangible form, remaining forever on our computers, web galleries or forums, but never being printed out.

While the cost of large-format printers is starting to come down, you'll often get better quality, with a lot less hassle, by going through a dedicated printing company. PhotoBox is one of the best-known photo-printing services, but it also offers extra-large prints, which are great for showing off your artwork.

We tried out the service to print off an image at 30 x 20 inches. Signing up for a PhotoBox account takes literally minutes, and you get 30 free standard-sized prints for your trouble. From there you can add images using the simple drag-and-drop interface, or one of the other upload options, including email and standard browser. We tried uploading a fairly large photograph, and the whole process took just a couple of minutes, which is pretty impressive. Speed will, of course, depend on your internet connection.

Once the picture is uploaded, you simply select the size of print that you want, add it to your basket, use the crop box to line up the dimensions of the print with your image and then go through the checkout. We ordered our print on a Friday afternoon, and it was with us by the Monday morning, so top marks for speed.

In terms of quality, we have absolutely no complaints. The print arrived well packaged, in great condition and of excellent quality. ■

Summary: If you want to show off your Photoshop creations, then going large is the best way to do it. As long as your images are created at a big enough size, the quality will be great and the delivery is fast.

Rating: **4/5**

AKVIS LightShop

Not so much light, more of a let-down for those with high expectations

Manufacturer: AKVIS

Web: www.akvis.com

Price: \$117/£57.27

Spec: Preset light designs

Adjustable parameters such as Color, Brightness and Blend modes

Easy-to-navigate workspace

Modifiers including Scale, Whirlpool and Mask Sector

Preview window and effect isolation options

Standalone or plug-in application

Windows 2000/XP/NT/2003/Vista, Mac OS X 10.3.9-10

Our first thoughts of AKVIS LightShop are slightly disappointing. The AP team were keen to try out this piece of software, with the promise of professional results. While it does go some way to providing such, we'd have to say that 'entertaining' results would be a more justifiable description.

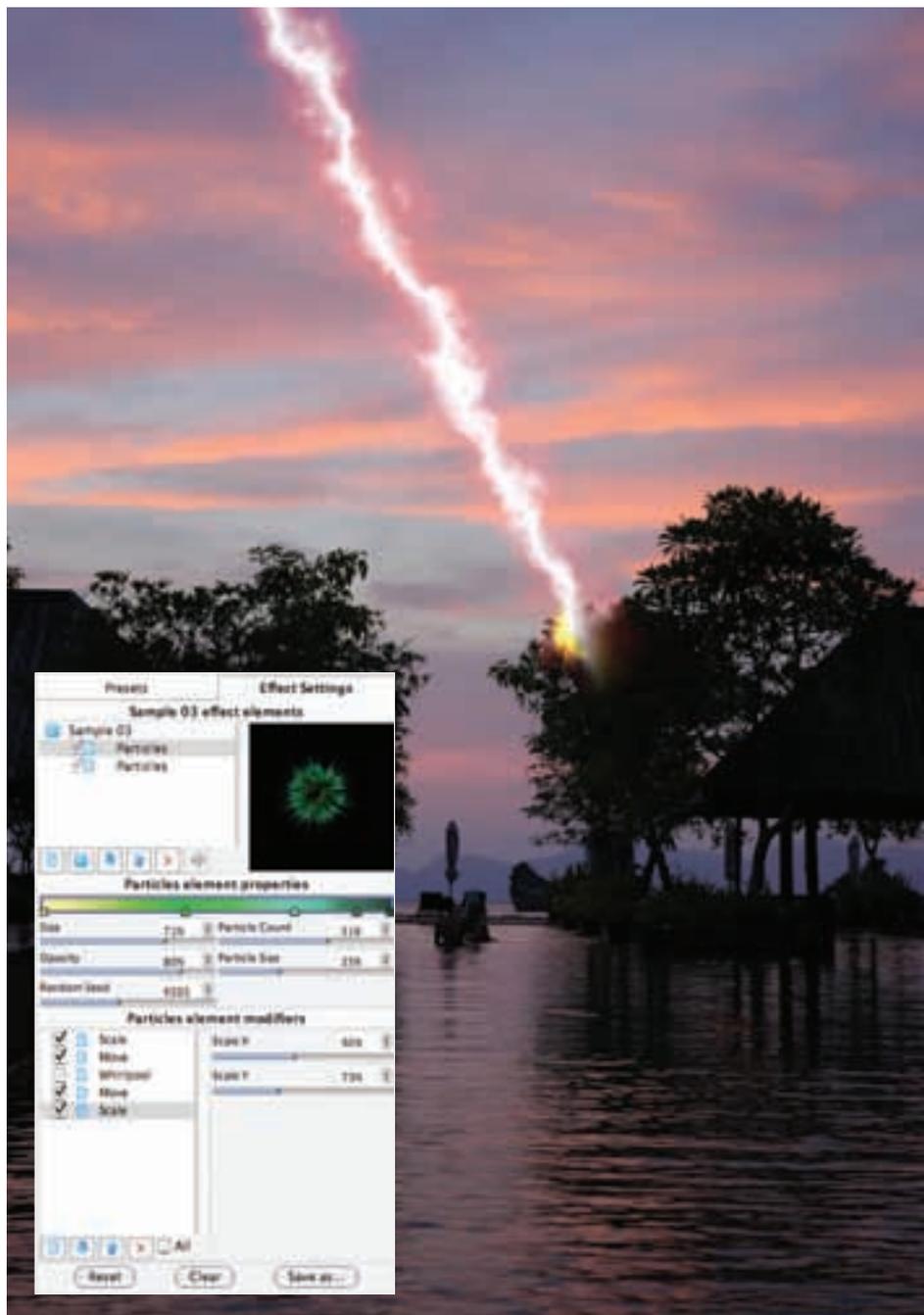
Upon installation, opening the software presents a workspace that seems unfamiliar but it takes little time to navigate the options, as most are familiar with those in Photoshop. Color, Brightness, Opacity, Scale and Angle can be applied to your lighting effects through a system of simple slide bars and input values located at the bottom of your workspace. Positioning is a simple task with on-screen drag-and-drop functions.

You're presented with quick-start options in the form of lighting presets. These serve up many capable examples from fireworks to flame. Upon selecting the most appropriate with a simple double-click, you can then begin modifications within the Effect Settings dialog. These provide defined and variant application, allowing maximum control over your modifications which include creating forms of gradient within your light source to the most specific of necessities and preferences.

Each preset comes with its own defined settings that can be deactivated and reactivated, known as 'modifiers'. These include X and Y scaling, Move grid, allowing you to offset your light source, and Whirlpool, which acts similarly to the Twirl filter. These can then be further defined, with options to modify the Size, Opacity, Particle Count and Particle Size supplying shape and definition.

You can also apply modifiers to any light effect, creating new sources and groups. Modifiers can be applied with the click of a button, allowing you to select from a range of preset options, though these can also be altered manually. Creations can be saved anytime and applied to other imagery.

However, regardless of its attractive presets and defined options, this software does have its shortcomings. Patience is a real virtue when using AKVIS LightShop, as at times application can be increasingly slow. This in turn has an adverse effect on wanting to create more complex lighting solutions.



Also, the more we used the options to manipulate, there was a distinct feeling of limitation. Not in the options presented, but in the faculty they provide to create in comparison to Photoshop. We became slightly frustrated at the inability to get stuck in and influence effects directly, instead forced to apply digit by digit several times over, taking us perhaps longer than it should and certainly would if applied directly in Photoshop.

Professional designers are said to be able to find many uses for the software, however we feel that this is more a teething application for those less versed in sophisticated options such as Photoshop, After Effects and Lightwave 3D. ■

LIGHTNING: Here's one we made earlier; such a simple effect did take a little while

Summary: Fun but at times frustrating, this is a product with potential. However, those versed in more advanced techniques may see it as a step back.

Rating: **2/5**



GREEN SCREEN: Eco-Mode conserves energy by defining a setting for the backlights at a 50 or 75% brightness level

MULTI-ANGLE: Offering 20 inches of viewing pleasure for the creative professional, the 2090UXi horizontal and vertical frequencies allow multi-angled viewing



NEC MultiSync Photo Edition LCD 2090UXi

A truly superior product for high-end users

Manufacturer: NEC
Web: www.nec-displays-solutions.co.uk
Price: £439/\$894.90
Spec: 20-inch screen size
178-degrees horizontal and vertical viewing angle
700:1 contrast ratio
1,600 x 1,200 at 60Hz resolution
OmniColor six-axis colour data
Exemplarily ergonomics
MultiSync Soundbar 90

NEC supplies another stellar piece of hardware to the design market in the form of the MultiSync Photo Edition LCD 2090UXi. This is a product that promises to supply "image precision for the perceptive photographer" and doesn't shortchange its consumers. In fact, we're willing to admit that this monitor is worth every penny spent within its £439 asking price.

With a professional and seemingly minimal style, the 2090UXi initially seems weighty and perhaps slightly plain. In fact, this is a technical 'creature' of substance rather than style. Once users place their hands upon the 2090UXi, they discover just what ergonomic delights it offers. With adjustable height of up to 150mm, -5 to +30 degree screen tilt and TORO™ Design providing -170 to +170-degree swivel, comfortable viewing is assured long into lengthy user sessions. This means that, for example, artists who predominantly work with portrait imagery can adjust the screen to suit, maximising application through providing natural viewing.

The monitor also delivers less colour shift and eradication of glare, reflection or distortion with movement, both screen and users. AmbiBright is another integrated function within this powerful product that automatically adjusts the monitor backlight depending on the brightness of lighting conditions.

This also provides settings that allow the monitor to automatically enter a power-saving mode when lighting falls below predestined values, a saviour regarding energy expense.

At the rear users are provided with three inputs – VGA, DVI-I and DVI-D – which allows for the connection of three PCs at once. Color Comp provides sophisticated science that in turn provides electronic improvements to uniformity or hotspots, along with compensation for variances in monitor colour, greyscale and luminance. Users can access advanced AccuColor controls purposefully adjusting colour temperatures, fine-tuning six separate colour levels, which is paramount as most LCD monitors consist of three.

Known as OmniColor, this six-axis colour data achieves standard sRGB as well as optimising visual quality by creating precise colour images for still imagery. The 2090UXi succeeds in using the colour reproduction limits of its competitors to its advantage, enabling colour correction of individual value without the disruption of other colours. Rapid Response technology allows uninterrupted full motion video, minimising the effects of ghosting and blurring, achieving as many as 250 frames per second. The impact of presentation and streaming web video is superlative.

Considering all factors, consumers are presented with a product that delivers crystal clarity of its on-screen imagery through the application and collaboration of all its 30 new features. ■

Summary: The MultiSync monitor offers users uncompromised performance and all-new 30 features provide unparalleled dynamics in related fields and functions. All this, and at a handsome retail price too

Rating: **5/5**

PRO PERFORMER: The 2090UXi is designed for high-end users who demand accuracy, performance and image control



Black and White in CS3 and Lightroom

The creation of monochrome composition isn't as black and white as it seems

Manufacturer: Focal Press, an imprint of Elsevier
Web: www.focalpress.com
Price: \$34.95/£19.99
Spec: Over 140 coloured pages
Coloured/monochrome annotation and edification
Step-by-step tutorials presented in conversation form
Easy-to-follow instructions
Professional tips and tricks
Professional techniques to optimise technical and creative improvement
Covers all new features in CS3 and Lightroom
Learn methods within RAW converters, scripts and plug-ins

Ararity of sorts, this is a publication that makes what seems monotonous or daunting in fact entertaining and productive. Producing monochromatic imagery and colour management may seem uninteresting and intensive to some, but the acknowledgement of such practices can be essential in creating wonderful imagery for all photographers' portfolios. So for those looking to brush up such skills, this will be a profitable purchase.

As you flick through the 240+ pages within this title, you'll notice that each page is annotated and accompanied by reference imagery suggesting this is more than a mere text book. You'd be right. This title sets itself apart from many on

the market, not only through such values, but also by streamlining complicated application. It does so by presenting material in a workshop-oriented capacity, essentially simplifying the learning process.

Colour management is addressed in a coherent fashion, outlining core practices, cutting away unnecessary and confusing information for creative users. Presented in the form of a quick reference chart, outlining methodologies and key stages in the acknowledgement section, high-quality capture, practical workflow practices and non-destructive digital darkroom image processing are also addressed.

There are many interesting practices that can be divulged and digested, enhancing an artist's method. For example, presenting and deciphering black-and-white conversion methods, addressing how these must honour spectral relationships to truly grasp powerful and compelling advantages. Then there's the presentation and education of non-destructive values and best practices within Photoshop CS3. These, of course, are just two of a plethora of dedicated and interesting practices.

Experienced freelance photographer Leslie Alsheimer, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, educates throughout this title. Specialising in one-on-one workshop instruction, she is also the director of the Santa Fe Digital Darkroom & Forward Focus workshops. Bryan O'Neil Hughes features also, product manager for the Photoshop team and product evangelist for the Lightroom team. Surely a winning team! ■



MAKE MISTAKES: Check out the 'Mistakes Can Be Magic' section for some real creative insight, revealing that, as Scott Adams says: "Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes; art is knowing which ones to keep"

Summary: This title certainly teaches essential principles and methods as well as educating users to trust their intuition and aesthetic judgement. Its fully integrated colour managed workflow optimises the learning process.

Rating: **4/5**

The HDRI Handbook

Everything you need to know in one book

Manufacturer: Rocky Nook Inc
Web: www.rockynook.com
Price: \$49.95/£24.20
Spec: Over 340 full-colour pages,
Foundations of HDRI
HDR workflow tools explained
How to capture HDR
Tone mapping for superior print
Image-based lighting/CG rendering

From its laminated, glossy cover to its silky matte pages laden with colour illustrations, *The HDRI Handbook* seems one sexy product for purchase. This book is an aesthetic pleasure, persuading readers that High Dynamic Range Imaging is one of the brightest methods in the creative industry. They're probably right, both technically and metaphorically.

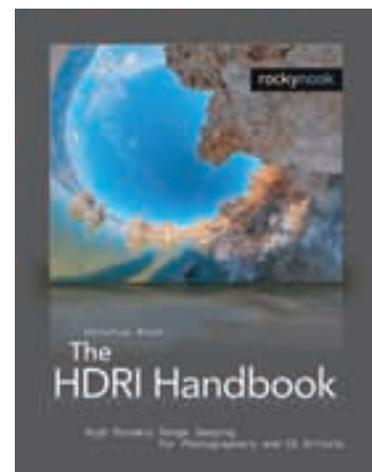
But putting the excitement of its visual appeal aside, how does this title truly deliver? First impressions suggest that it's a book with a specific audience in mind. HDRI isn't an extremely complex subject, but for someone with little or no

photography knowledge, this may seem a daunting read. Needless to say, an interest in the subject is preferable and will make this book easier to digest.

That's not to say, however, that this title is in any way elitist. In essence, it presents itself as the 'missing link', documenting the practices of HDRI – once exclusive to Hollywood – to consumers at last able to purchase the technology. Jammed with tricks of the trade and professional practices providing, as explained, "everything you need to build a comprehensive knowledge base", this title will enable you understand the true creative capabilities of HDRI.

Photoshop users can appreciate this book, as it helps to understand the true potential and evolve skills throughout its imaging options. Examples include the specific applications of Curves, the preference of image modes, the advantage of non-destructible effects such as Exposure, and the virtues of comprehending Levels and Channels applications.

All tasks and teachings are defined, and illustrations clearly visually annotated to make practice as coherent as possible for the enthusiastic reader. This is something the title achieves throughout its pages. From describing the core principles and science, including the relationship between aperture value and exposure compensation, essential equipment, the application of specialised effects or CGI application, this clearly defined resource essentially helps readers understand the foundation of HDRI and beyond. ■



DVD: The companion HDRI Handbook DVD provides practical samples to improve working practice, as well as software evaluations and a new breed of community-driven HDR software, so you can hit the ground running

Summary: An all-inclusive read that will enhance techniques and promote the confidence to use them in photographers, CG artists and cinematographers alike.

Rating: **4/5**