

Corel Paint ShopPro PHOTO X2

by Kathren Masten

Corel Paint ShopPro Photo X2 is a complex photo editing program designed to allow a user to make simple corrections or perform total manipulation of images. By complex I mean it allows all users, from beginners to expert graphic artists, using lots of tools and special effects, to do just about anything to their images with relative ease.

The product comes with a step by step user guide, which most programs of this complexity do not. I appreciated the user guide being able to get me up and running quite quickly, being a photographer and graphics artist myself. As a youth mentor with experience in teaching programs like this to children, I felt the user guide was easy to understand and recommend this program for first time users.

The features I most enjoyed as a portrait photographer were the easy to use cosmetic correction tools. Paint ShopPro offers standard red eye correction, and can adjust your tan and smooth skin by magically detecting eyes & lips to keep them sharp and clear. It has wrinkle smoothers, teeth whiteners and other useful portrait “touch-up” tools. You can even shed a few pounds with the thinify tool.

I enjoyed the effects browser. Basically, it’s a list of available effects. As you click on them they transform your image with the given effect temporarily applied to give you a thumbnail view of what the effect will do to your image. Once you’ve chosen an effect, it can be “tweaked” to obtain the desired result you need by moving sliders that apply the intensity of the effect to your image.

In contrast, as a professional graphics person, I did not like the layers options as it was difficult to find and edit different layers. Using layers allows you to layer text, lighting, and a multitude of other effects which may be combined into one image when all edits are completed. The user manual did not go into any real depth to help you master the use of layers. I have worked for years with other programs utilizing layer capabilities, and found this feature frustrating in Paint ShopPro Photo.

The program has a number of shortfalls. When you load the program, it automatically signs itself in as your default image editor and changes the icons for all of your image files (jpegs) to use their icon. When an image is double clicked, the program automatically opens to edit, cutting out my standard image viewer. Photo ShopPro Photo also wants to organize your entire image collection, and prompts you to do so quite often. Although these options may be good for some, I still like making the decisions and not letting the writers of every program I load decide what is best for me or my computer.

Overall, I would recommend Paint ShopPro Photo to casual photographers and beginning graphics students because of its ease of use and fun tools. However, professional editors might want to request a trial version for review before purchasing it. Corel Paint ShopPro Photo is quite affordable with the going rate of \$80-100 and comes with other attached freebies upon purchase, making it the most affordable of the editing programs available at this time. Unfortunately, it was designed specifically for PC platforms. Mac and Linux system users cannot use this program.

Minimum system requirements:

Windows XP and Vista with latest service packs installed; 500 MB Ram (768 MB Recommended, especially if using Vista); 1 GHz Processor (2GHz Highly recommended); 500MB hard disk space; 24-bit color display, 1024x768 resolution; Microsoft DirectX 9.0c or Higher; Apple QuickTime 7 or higher

Support: There is a knowledge base on line. Most support appears to be fee based.

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