

**December
2009
January
2010**

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**ROM is issued
six-times
a year to
members of the
Guildford PC
User Group
All Contributions
to the Editor
Tony Hawes
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ROM

Newsletter of the Guildford PC User Group

Editor's Bit

Seasons Greetings!

On the whole we've had a good year, a couple of hiccups with the weather earlier in the year, but overall not too bad. A pity that the rent for our hire of the hall was raised quite substantially, but by reducing our meetings and only holding them when we can guarantee a good attendance (numbers are poor at the peak of the summer holiday season and when we have potentially bad weather in January), we will manage for the foreseeable future.

With help from some of the major software and hardware companies who've provided samples for review and demonstration, we've had some excellent talks and demonstrations and as usual club members have shown willing to demonstrate their particular computing expertise: In particular thanks are due to Laurence Fenn, Francis Jacques, Paul Kuzmin, Miles Osmaston, John Childs, Bryce McCrerrick and all the others who make our regular meetings so enjoyable and informative.

A final thought: our membership is shrinking so getting more people to join our happy throng needs to be one of our/your 2010 New Year resolutions.

December Meeting — Quiz

As before we have a very good selection of 'goodies' donated by various companies as quiz



I hope you and your families have an enjoyable and peaceful Christmas and I wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Tony Hawes

prizes. The most valuable being worth over £200. So if you're a member of the Group get you thinking hat on and win something valuable in time for Christmas. If

(Continued on page 2)

ROM is now only available as a full-colour .pdf download from the Group web page at:
www.guildfordpcusergroup.co.uk

**NEXT MEETING — Monday
14th December 2009 at 7.45 p.m.**

Annual Quiz Competition Night

As in previous years we have a superb range of prizes on offer. However, the committee has decided that because of the quantity and value of the prizes the Quiz will be OPEN TO FULLY PAID-UP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ONLY.

Francis our Treasurer will be on hand to take your subscription to enable you to participate. If you opt to join the Group by paying your subscription this month (December 2009) your membership will be valid until March 2011. In other words you'll enjoy a 15-month subscription for the price of a normal 12-month subscription and be entitled to participate in the quiz.

Spread the word and please bring a friend — Warm mince pies, coffee & tea are free

**Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday
of each month at 7.45pm at the
Stoughton Youth Club and Community
Centre (opposite "The Royal" — Pub)
Worplesdon Road (A322), Guildford.**

Forthcoming Meetings

Monday 11th January 2010.

Winter holiday — no meeting.

Monday 8th February 2010.

Cygnett FM Transmitter & Doro
MemoryPlus in action.

Monday 8th March 2010.

In arrangement

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries or questions about the Guildford PC User Group and its activities please contact the following members of the committee:

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you're not a member of the Group join BEFORE the quiz if you wish to participate.

Secretary's Notes

A brief résumé of recent meetings.

14 September 2009. Paul Kuzmin showed his 1-TByte Linux Ripservers NAS (Network storage System), Linn Akurate DS (Digital Streamer) and speakers showing how the whole system worked together.

12 October 2009. This month's meeting consisted of three items:

1. A short practical introduction to some of the new and interesting features of Windows 7 which went on sale 10-days later.
2. We then saw three short introductory videos from Corel showing what's new in Corel's new, cheap and easy-to-use Digital Studio 2010 suite of programs.
3. Laurence Fenn then gave a practical demonstration of Corel Digital Studio

2010 in action.

9 November 2009. Two items on show this evening.

1. Tony Hawes brought along his laptop with Windows 7 64-bit installed and demonstrated and commented on the features in Windows 7 which appealed to him most: Aero snap to pin items to the sides of your desktop. Aero Peek for temporarily minimising (clearing) the icons on the desktop. Libraries for quick access to most used documents and images.
2. He then moved on to a demonstration of Nuance PDF Converter Professional 6 in action with his Epson Perfection V700 Photo scanner doing the scanning. He demonstrated the main features of the program which included how to create, convert, edit and share PDF files. At a fraction of the cost of Adobe Acrobat, PDF Converter 6 was shown to be a worthy and cost effective alternative.

Newsbytes

Sandberg Announce New USB Sound Box 7.1

Get top quality sound on your computer.

Danish company Sandberg, leading producer of quality computer accessories, has announced the new USB Sound Box 7.1. The Sandberg USB Sound Box 7.1 allows you to connect speaker systems with up to eight speakers – you can even choose whether to use analogue or digital connection. For recording purposes you can connect two microphones, as well as one analogue and one digital audio source. You can easily check all connected devices via the user-friendly software provided, which offers a whole host of functions. USB connection means easy installation and good access to ports and buttons.

The USB Sound Box 7.1 is compatible with Windows 7, Windows Vista and Windows XP. The Sandberg Sound Box 7.1 is available now at SRP £ 35.99 inc.



MAGIX Xtreme Photo & Graphic Designer 5.

Discover the creative potential of your photos

MAGIX AG, One of the leading international providers of software, online services, and digital content, has announced the release of MAGIX Xtreme Photo & Graphic Designer 5.



MAGIX Xtreme Photo & Graphic Designer 5 is, without equal, the most creative and timesaving solution for your images: Quick optimization, high-performance image editing, intelligent graphic design, and comfortable layout functions in a single completely intuitive program. Get more out of your

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

photos and profit from numerous unique design options and high-quality templates. Get excited about outstanding results; it's perfect for preparing gifts and presentations.

New Features:

- USP! Intelligent scaling: Change image formats without distorting important image content.
- Fast optimization. Use a slider to change the colour intensity of your images. This way, any image can find its suitable intensity.
- USP! Templates for practical online presentations (including 500 MB of free web space)
- USP! Experiment to create fun photo caricatures
- Wizards for cutting out objects, quickly cropping multiple photos, and uncomplicated creation of full screen pictures. Unwanted objects may be automatically removed from photos. Neither poles nor power lines will be in your way - every picture will become a perfect photograph.
- Non-destructive red eye correction: The original is preserved
- Colour temperature, standard shapes, object gallery, integrated spell checking
- Support for uncompressed raw formats (RAW) featured by the newest camera models, and more
- Improved montage and collages. Simply impressive: seamlessly combine photos to fantastic panorama photos. Includes automatic focal distance recognition and correction of lens distortions and perspectives.

Price & Availability:

MAGIX Xtreme Photo & Graphic Designer 5 is available now for SRP £49.99 inc from all major UK retailers and online partners including Amazon and PC World.

proDAD expands Adorage Product Line

proDAD expands Adorage Product Line with Effects Package 11 - HD Global Travel & Flags FX.

proDAD GmbH, a world-class maker of video effects products, today announced the latest addition to its popular Adorage product line – Adorage Effects Package 11 – HD Global Travel & Flags FX. As its name suggests, Adorage Effects Package 11 includes 5,000 global travel themed effects and transitions, including flags of the world, continents, images of countries, and combination images – all in stunning HD resolution. The effects and transitions contained in Adorage Effects Package 11 are an easy way to bring local and international travel themes into video projects. Editors working with SD footage can still take full advantage of the effects



contained in Adorage Effects Package 11. Rendering of the effects is up to 40% faster than other solutions, thanks to proDAD-designed codecs.

Adorage Effects Package 11 Program Compatibility

It provides seamless plug-in support for Adobe Premier/Pro/Elements, AVID Liquid, Canopus Edius/NEO, Corel/ULead MediaStudio & VideoStudio Pro X2, Magix Video Deluxe 15, and Sony Vegas/Vegas Pro NLE applications. Adorage Effects Package 11 also includes a stand-alone application for using the included effects. Already Unlocked versions of “Adorage for Pinnacle Studio” can also be enhanced with Effects Package 11 HD effects.

Adorage Effects Packages are a low cost way for video editors to add a wide range of high-quality effects and transitions to their video productions. Adorage has been widely popular among hobbyist video editors for over 10 years due its ease of use and low cost and is now attractive to the professional video editing community for the same reasons.

Cygnett GrooveTrip Mini FM Transmitter

Make the trip your destination by tracking your favourite iPod or iPhone tunes through your car or home stereo. Drive-time or home-time, you'll be prepared to go the distance with ear-bud free listening while you're on the go.



- Play your tunes out loud through your FM car or home stereo
- Simple keys to move through frequencies
- Memory feature - program four channels
- Recalls last frequency used
- Digital tuning & wide range of FM channels (88.1Mhz - 107.9Mhz)
- Easy to use – connect to your MP3 player & tune it to an unused FM station

- Superior sound quality & signal
- Auto-switch OFF (60 seconds) - when no signal is received
- Operates on 2x AAA batteries (not included)
- 12 month manufacturer's warranty for peace of mind

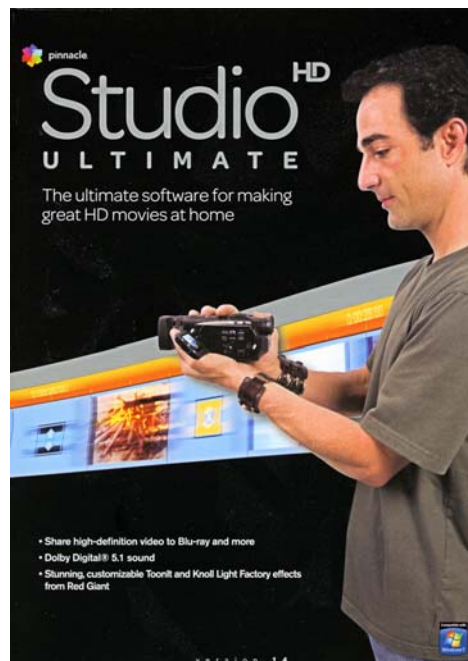
Price & Availability

From Amazon.co.uk for £21.85.

Pinnacle Studio HD

Avid has announced a major update to its family of Pinnacle Studio video editing solutions. Widely regarded as the industry's leading application for home video editing, Pinnacle Studio software now offers an even broader array of HD capabilities with a new simplified user interface that makes it easier to manage content and an unified capture/import utility for the latest formats and camcorders. Other new features include:

- A stop-motion capture for animated and fast-motion effects.
- New content and enhancements for Pinnacle Montage.
- Dynamic Motion Titler tool that includes a number of new templates.
- A new stabilizer effect – leveraging the same technology used in Avid's professional editing products to fix shaky camera shots.



The new Pinnacle Studio meets the needs of a wide range of consumers, from novices to video enthusiasts and semi-professionals. The family of products includes Pinnacle Studio HD, Pinnacle Studio Ultimate and Pinnacle Studio Ultimate Collection, which offer a complete HDV & AVCHD workflow and allows consumers to export movies to Flash, QuickTime, PS3, Nintendo Wii, Xbox, Apple iPod and more. Pinnacle Studio Ultimate and

(Continued on page 4)

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Pinnacle Ultimate Collection also offer Blu-ray authoring with motion menus.

“This version of Studio absolutely rocks – it’s probably the best advance since the move to digital. New built-in features help to make it very easy for newcomers and hobbyists to create Hollywood-like movies and to turn their family and holiday shoots into something really special,” said Pinnacle Studio Beta tester Mike Shaw, an international award-winning amateur movie maker. Shaw also highlighted the new user interface improvements, which make it easier for editors to find their way around, and praised the enhancements of Pinnacle Montage themes, as well as the new import features that make it easier to select the source of the movies consumers wish to import.

Alec Marshall, Director of Segment Marketing for Creative Enthusiasts at Avid, said, “A growing number of both video and point-and-shoot cameras now capture high-definition video, creating a burgeoning demand for editing tools that allow for high-quality export to the web, upload to YouTube, and creation of HD files for sharing. The latest version of Pinnacle Studio makes HD editing a breeze, empowering consumers to easily grab photos and videos from video cameras, still digital cameras or camera phones and easily bring that content to life using music, Pinnacle Montage Themes, animations and effects. Once finished, they can share their masterpieces with friends and family—or the world—with direct high-quality upload to YouTube, or by simply burning a DVD.”

Customers who purchase Pinnacle Studio Ultimate software receive two bonus professional plug-ins: ToonIt and Knoll Light factory effects from video masters Red Giant. Those who purchase Pinnacle Studio Ultimate Collection will receive the most complete solution, including a green sheet for Chroma key effects and six highly acclaimed professional plug-ins from Red Giant:

1. Shine ultra-fast light ray effects
2. ToonIt turns video into cartoon style animation
3. Knoll Light factory creates lens flares, sunsets & more
4. Magic Bullet Looks generates advanced video styles
5. 3D stroke creates glowing lines, swirling shapes, and 3D camera effects
6. Particular smoke, explosion, and abstract effects

Pricing & Availability

The price of Pinnacle Studio HD, Pinnacle Studio Ultimate and Pinnacle Studio Ultimate Collection remains the same as previous version: £49.99, £79.99 and £99.99 respectively. Pinnacle Studio is compatible with Windows Vista SP2 (Both 32-bit & 64-bit), Windows XP SP3 &

Windows 7.

Existing customers currently using Pinnacle Studio versions 9,10, 11 and 12 are eligible for upgrade via Pinnacle’s website for £49.99 (upgrade to Pinnacle Studio Ultimate) and £69.99 (upgrade to Pinnacle Studio Ultimate Collection). For more information visit www.pinnaclesys.com.

SanDisk — New USB Flash Drives

SanDisk Corporation has introduced an innovative new family of SanDisk USB flash drives, including the world’s first backup USB flash drive with simple backup software activation at the touch of a button. The SanDisk Ultra Backup USB portable flash drive is the first offering of the company’s new SanDisk Ultra USB product line. With capacities up to 64 gigabytes (GB), the SanDisk Ultra Backup USB flash drive is designed to protect computer users’ photos, music, videos, personal and business documents, and other types of digital files, with the simple touch of a button. No software installation is needed. The drive protects onboard digital content with a dual layer of security, including password-protected access control and ultra-secure AES hardware-based encryption.²

The new SanDisk USB product family includes three different product lines:

- The popular SanDisk Cruzer USB flash drive which provides simple, reliable and portable storage, plus access to a variety of U3 applications.
- The SanDisk Ultra Backup USB flash drive offers the added protection and peace of mind that consumers expect from the minds behind flash memory.
- The SanDisk Extreme Contour provides increased security protection and higher performance levels, enclosed in a sleek, elegant industrial design.

SanDisk Ultra Backup USB Flash Drive

Back up critical files with the simple touch of a button.

With no cables required, or any complicated software to install, the new SanDisk Ultra Backup USB flash drive is a complete backup solution that provides an incredibly easy way to protect digital files. It uses patent-pending backup technology with capacities up to 64GB, large enough to back up average consumer requirements, as well as critical small business files and documents. In addition to one’s digital personal life, these products protect critical work files with a dual layer of both password protection and AES hardware encryption. This ensures content stays private and secure (via data scrambling at the flash controller level) when the drives are either physically removed for portability, or stored away for safe keeping.

The SanDisk Cruzer has been redesigned with a contemporary look as part of the new

SanDisk USB family of flash drives. These portable, reliable drives are designed to share consumers’ digital world with ease, with up to 32GB of storage for simple sharing of photos, videos and other files.

The entire new SanDisk USB family introduces an iconic new design language developed by global innovation firm frog design. Signature design elements include juxtaposed L shapes that create a dynamic, yet balanced, composition, a bright red USB connector and a simple cap-less design, which exposes the USB connector for use via a dynamic sliding mechanism. When plugged in to a host device, a glowing, amber-colored LED light alerts users that the drives are ready for reading or writing data.



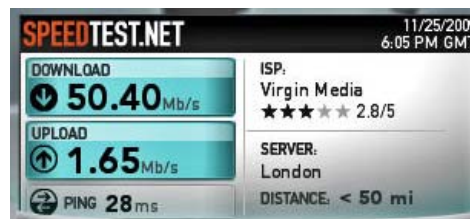
The new SanDisk USB family will continue to have U3 Smart technology, developed by SanDisk, which allows applications to run from a SanDisk USB flash drive without having to be installed on a computer. PC-users can download a variety of both free and paid software, games and content by visiting www.u3.com, or by accessing the SanDisk USB Program Wizard in the U3 Launchpad. Among other bonus applications available for download is the Veoh Web Player for SanDisk, which enables users to watch, download and share Internet video content.

Pricing & Availability

SanDisk 32GB Ultra Backup USB Flash Drive. RRP £103.64 Amazon.co.uk price £75.46 inc VAT and free delivery.

....and if it's speed you want

My home in Fleet is now served by Virgin’s 50Mbps Cable Broadband. Having subscribed it really does work — 50.4Mbps download, with no capacity or usage restrictions and 1.65Mbps upload — three times my normal upload speed — see screen grab below.



Adobe Premiere Elements 8 Tony Hawes takes a look

Introduction

It's now four years since I last reviewed Adobe Premiere Elements and with the launch of Version 8 considered it time to have a look at how Premiere Elements has evolved since then.

Based on the professional functionality of the very much more expensive Adobe Premiere CS4, Adobe Premiere Elements 8 automates some of the more routine tasks involved in editing home videos. Even a relative beginner can experiment with video editing effects such as transitions, titles and audio. Using Adobe Premiere Elements, footage can be easily captured from a DV camcorder and edited with professional-level effects and delivered as custom DVDs, complete with menus and scene indexes to share with family and friends.

The review sample came as the bundled version together with Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 for consumer-level photo editing. Although currently available as separate products, the two programs bundled together in a single retail package will appeal, as together in one affordable solution, these products offer users a powerful software combination to easily blend still photos with video clips. They allow the creation of lively slideshows and photo-rich video projects that can be burned to DVD and easily viewed by friends and family on the TV screen.

Editing Made Easy

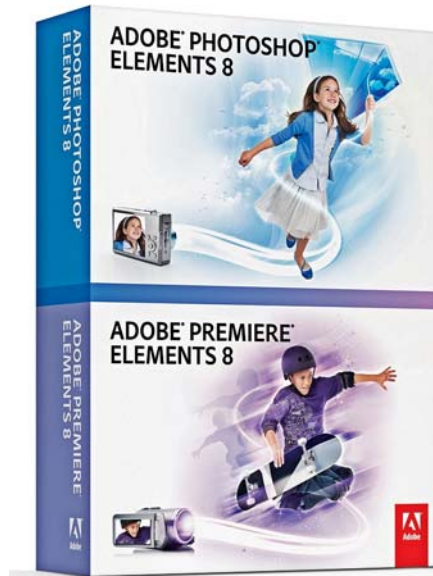
Essential features in Adobe Premiere Elements include:

- reliable transfer of footage from DV camcorders
- automatic shifting of video clips to fill in any gaps whenever scenes are trimmed or rearranged
- integrated DVD burning, which makes it simple to create watchable DVDs.

Users can experiment with a wide range of easy-to-use special effects, like warping, twirls and pans, as well as broadcast-quality scene transitions and titles. Adobe Premiere Elements customers can easily add sound effects and music — using multiple audio tracks — to set the mood for their home movies.

In Use

As the sales of Camcorders soar and prices fall, Adobe have clearly realised that there is a vast consumer market for video editing software and being a market leader in the professional video editing field with Adobe Premiere CS4, Adobe have with Premiere Elements, swapped the complicated Premiere CS4 interface with the relatively simple Elements one. However this approach has one obvious problem, the



availability of alternative consumer-level video editing programs from the likes of Pinnacle, Sony and Ulead who've been selling and developing easy to use video editing programs for a number of years and who have refined their programs' interfaces specifically for the consumer market.

Adobe has clearly aimed Premiere Elements 8 at video-editing novices, or those who have some experience of editing who plan or aspire to use the capabilities of its professional and very expensive (£700+) bigger brother, Adobe Premiere CS4 for their video editing and DVD creation.

One Big Problem

I looked forward to doing this review with some pleasure, but sadly ran into an intractable problem. I've upgraded my standard desktop computer to Windows 7 and have been pleased with its rejuvenated performance so far, so was bothered and concerned that Premiere Elements wouldn't recognise my JVC GDR93 Camcorder. Each time I opened Premier Elements and clicked on my JVC camcorder to Capture (Import) video footage an error message came up "No DV Camcorder Connected". I tore my hair out as I puzzled as to why it wouldn't work. Finally I read the readme file. This stated "Capturing and Importing Video. DV Device control will be disabled and capture will not proceed normally if sound card is not present or offline". As I don't have a sound card, using the RealTek ALC Audio chip from my motherboard to drive my monitor's built-in mini speakers, this left me puzzled.

Adobe's support web site offered no further advice, only a list of camcorders that were known to work with Premiere Elements, my JVC wasn't on the list, so assumed that as it is now over four years old my camcorder it is just too old. Eventually having slept on the problem I fished out my recently retired HD that still had Vista as an



Fig. 1. Initial welcome screen

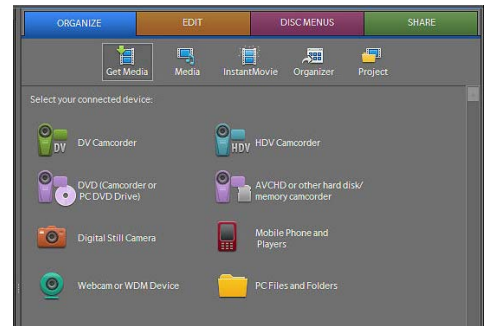


Fig. 2. Get Media Import Screen



Fig 3. Imported separated clips (top right), clips I've dragged onto the Sceneline (bottom) and current clip being edited (top left).

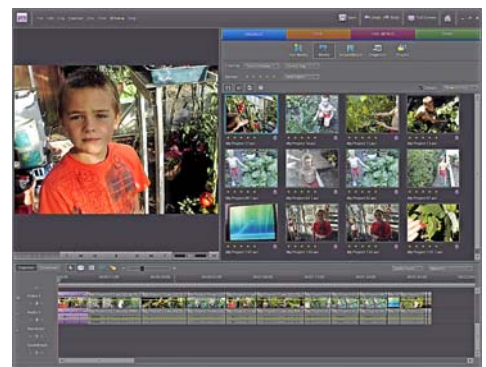


Fig. 4. Same View, this time showing Timeline

OS, installed Premiere Elements and Bingo! — it worked. The problem appears to be with Windows 7, not Premiere Elements, but why would Adobe offer advice that is wrong? After all if it works with Vista it should work with Windows 7. So the review was conducted using Windows Vista.

Importing Video Clips

The process of getting your video clips into your computer is relatively simple with the interface offering two ways to generate mov-

(Continued on page 7)

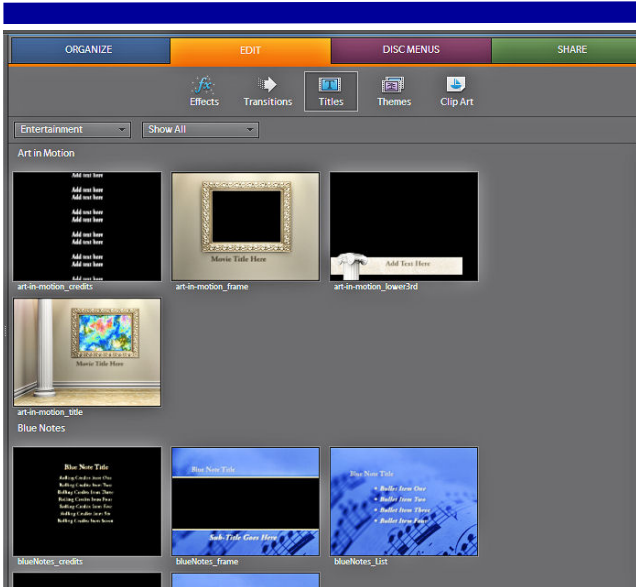


Fig. 5: Pre-Drawn Titles — Ideal for the opening of your video. Just add your own text



Fig. 6: Adding Titles as overlays onto your video: Choose you font, colour and position where you want the title to show

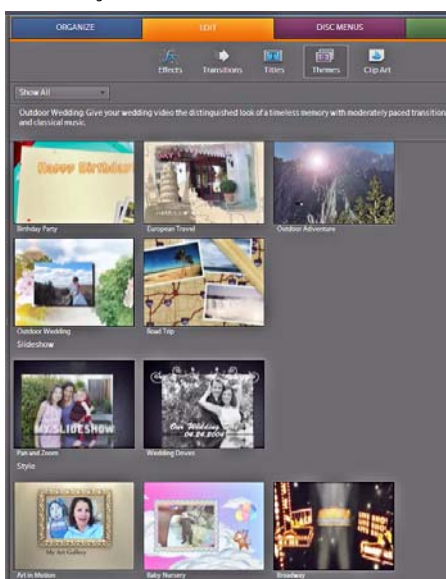


Fig. 6: Ready made Themes for your video — Weddings, birthdays etc.



Fig. 7: Included Clip Art

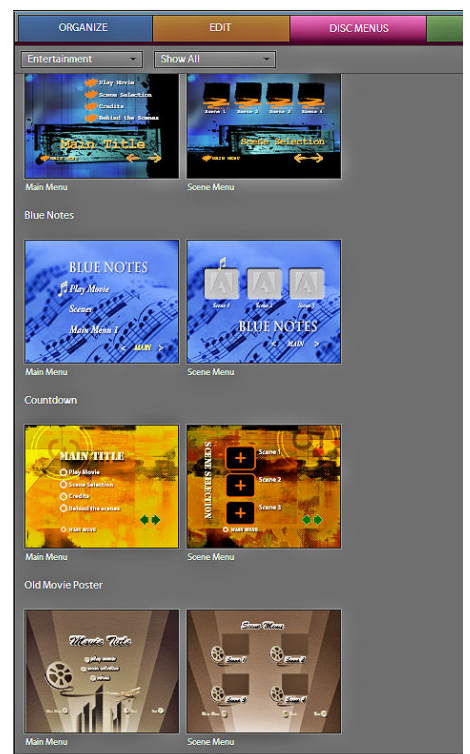


Fig. 8: Suggested Disc Menus — allowing the user to navigate around the final burnt DVD

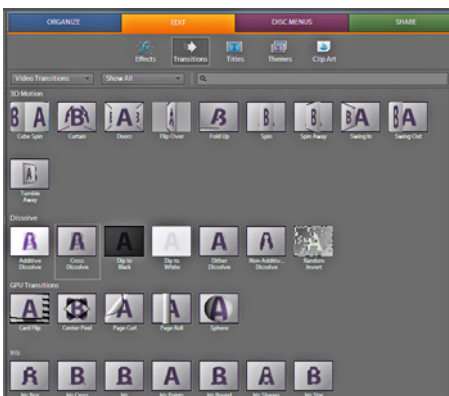


Fig. 9: Premiere Elements 8 comes with a multitude of transitions for inserting between one scene and the next. They look pretty but beware as the wrong one will spoil your video. Ask yourself when did you last see a gimmicky transition used in a commercial film or TV program? Most use straight cuts or fades from one scene to the next. My advice — don't be tempted to use a flashy transition just because it's available.



Fig. 10: Premiere Elements comes with the SmartSound Quicktracks plug-in. Smart-Sound Quicktracks allows you to select from among a large collection of soundtracks for your video project. You use SmartSound tools to customise the length of the soundtrack so that it corresponds exactly to the length of your movie. Quicktracks are accessed via the Smart-Sound button in Timeline

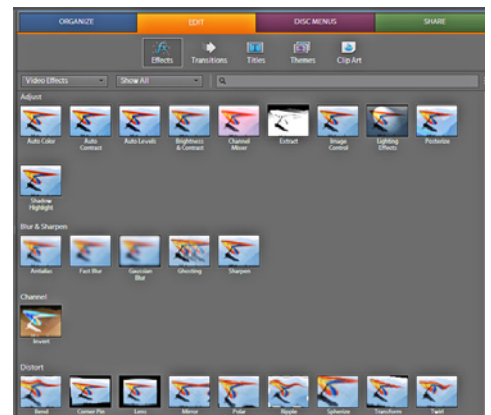


Fig. 11: Special effects. Blur. Sharpen, Auto-colour correction, sepia, old movie etc. A useful collection of essential and useful effects.

(Continued from page 5)

ies from your video: Manual creation and Instant Movie:

1. Plug your DV camcorder into your computer—using an IEEE 1394 (FireWire, i.LINK) connection.
2. Select the “Organise” tab and then “Get Media” icon selecting device icon (DV Camcorder in my case).
3. Premiere Elements does the one-step process of capturing your video.
4. Adobe Premiere Elements automatically finds all the footage on your tape
5. Separates your clips into scenes
6. And presents them in order, ready for editing.

The screen grabs on page 5 (Figs. 1 to 4) show the import video clips process. Note in particular the four main options tabs in Fig. 2. (“Organise”, “Edit”, “Disc Menus” and “Share”), where you select the device you want to use. When your connected device is shown, click on it and one is then connected (in my case) to my DV Camcorder through the Firewire connection where it takes control of the camcorder’s controls allowing one to play the camcorder and import video footage.

The screens on the previous page (page 6) show the processes geared to guide the user through the usual flow of video production from capture to editing, adding transitions, special effects and titles, creating DVD menus, and on to burning a DVD that is capable of playing on your home DVD player, or for exporting to formats perfect for Web streaming or e-mail — the whole process being intuitive and relatively simple.

Editing

Each part of the video editing process has its own standard window arrangement, which you can adjust to suit your own preferences. The interface adjusts automatically, and individual tool cursors cleverly change to give you instant feedback on the task at hand. If using the Instant Movie tool that automatically creates a movie with music and transitions, the new Smart Tags feature Smart Fix attempts to identify any unsuitable video footage such as obviously out of focus clips, those suffering from excessive hand-held photo-shake, poor lighting etc. and automatically adjusts the footage to ensure they’re not included in the final Instant Movie footage. As well as Smart Fix other automatic tools include Smart Trim and Smart Mix. The Smart Trim tool automatically detects the usable portions of your clips, so you can trim out the unusable bits with ease. Smart Mix can for example automatically reduce the volume of your backing music track so your foreground sound is not drowned out.

There is also a fun animation option that lets you use linked superimposed graphics of moving people or objects within video clips as shown here using a green sheet as a



Fig. 12: Here I’ve added a still photo to the Sceneline



Fig. 13: ...and here is a Chroma-keyed Superman

chroma key background (above).

On the whole the editing process is fairly simple to master. But once you start delving past these simple and relatively easy to use tools, perhaps for example because you want to be more creative, things start to get complicated. You lose the initial simplicity and enter the realm of more complicated screens and difficult to interpret controls which is not helped by the absence of a printed manual. Premiere Elements 7 came with a useful 200-page printed manual. Premiere Elements 8 comes with none!

Integration

Where Premiere Elements is likely to score is with its integration with Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 (see John Child’s review on page 8). Users of Adobe’s high-end video editing products to whom I’ve talked, almost without exception use Photoshop, or CS4 (Creative Suite 4) as it’s called nowadays, as their graphical editor of choice for manipulating and integrating photos or graphics into their video production. Premiere Elements 8 users will I suspect choose Adobe Photoshop Elements 8, because of the close integration between the two programs. Conversely, I wouldn’t mind betting that Photoshop Elements users who want a video editor that will integrate with their image editor will choose Premiere Elements as their video editor of choice!

One nifty feature is that it’s possible to use Photoshop Elements to edit any image on the Premiere Elements timeline should you wish, with the timeline image being updated automatically. However, one doesn’t necessarily need to rely on Photoshop Elements to import a still photo image as any suitable graphic image on your computer or from a memory card can be im-

ported.

On the previous pages I’ve added a selection of screen grabs showing the editing interface in action.

DVD Creation

Having edited your video project to your satisfaction the final process is creating a DVD for use in your domestic TV DVD player or for sending to friends or family. Creating (burning) a DVD in Premiere Elements is simple, Adobe have included an excellent selection of pre-designed DVD templates for weddings, birthdays etc. These can be linked to the opening screen to allow the viewer to jump to the required scene or clip, very much like a commercial movie DVD.

Also available is a selection of motion DVD menus designed to enhance your project.

Conclusions

Premiere Elements 8 is an interesting consumer level editor with many high-end features. Despite an initial antipathy (I hate learning something new and complicated) I’ve now grown to like it as the various menu options and choices become easier to understand and use. I still think the raw novice with no experience of video editing should look elsewhere, but for those familiar with video editing who aspire to higher things, Adobe Premiere Elements is a useful step up the video editing ladder.

Pros

1. Adobe Premiere Elements can be considered as the ‘Poor-mans’ Adobe Premiere CS4, because it comes with many of the features of Adobe’s professional editing package but without the cost.
2. Has a wide selection of import formats.
3. Excellent titling.
4. Integrates superbly with Photoshop Elements 8 (or earlier).

Cons

1. Although much easier to use than the earlier version I tried, I still consider it not as intuitive as some of its competitors. If you are a novice be prepared for a long learning curve once you want to use more than the basic simple video editing menus.
2. Whereas nearly every other video editing package calls a storyboard a storyboard (the feature where one drags clips around for editing), Adobe in their wisdom call it a “Sceneline” which is a little confusing.
3. The biggest weakness is that there is no printed manual. Version 7 had a 200-page printed manual covering Premiere Elements, this one has none. The only help is on-line via the Web.

Pricing and Availability

Adobe Premiere Elements 8 together with Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 are available as a bundled package with a RRP of £114.17. Currently Amazon.co.uk sell the bundle for £85.10 inc. VAT and free delivery.

If you just want Adobe Premiere Elements 8 by itself it’ll cost £58 from Amazon.co.uk. See John Child’s review of Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 starting on the next page (page 8).

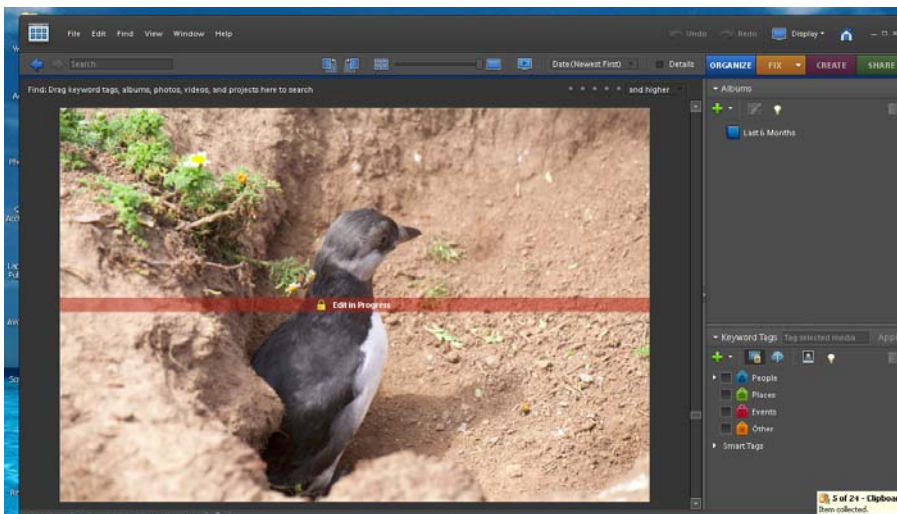
Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 for Windows

Reviewed by John Childs ARPS, CPAGB.

Introduction

Adobe has recently updated this program and I must admit I was curious to see how it performed. It is available in versions for both Windows and Mac platforms, but whilst the Windows version contains an organiser, the Mac version does not. I believe this is because the free program iPhoto which comes as part of the Mac operating system and which can be updated for a price is regarded as good enough to act instead. For my photography needs I use Adobe LightRoom v2 and Photoshop CS2 in their Mac versions. I was therefore interested to see if my needs could be met by a much cheaper product. For this review I have used the Windows version, which I am using on my MacBook Pro laptop using Windows XP running under Boot Camp. This enables Windows to take over the Mac machine and enables it to be to all intents and purposes, a Windows machine. It does not run in a Mac window but utilises all the resources of the machine.

In Use



This program provides the ability to organise your photos, editing them and out-putting them in the form of prints, a slideshow, uploading to web pages or to be produced as photo books. It is quite a versatile program and on paper should cater for all a photographer's needs.

The first thing I noticed after installing the program was how slow it ran. My laptop is a Core Duo running at 2.00 GHz with 1.5 Mb of Ram and is therefore well above the minimum specifications required. You are presented with an opening screen with two choices: opening the Organiser or the Edit screens. If you go to the Organise screen, you can access all the images you have already downloaded. You can of course download images from files, camera, scanner, etc. Keywords can be allo-

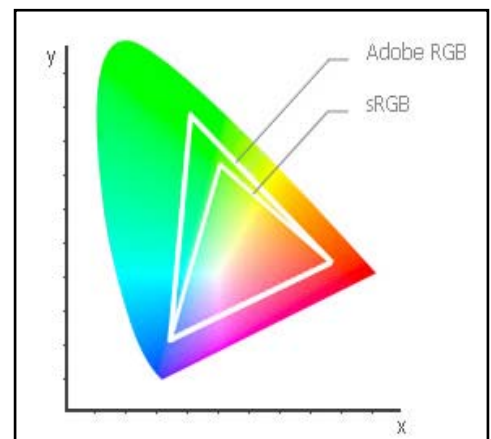


cated to images so that they can be easily found later. One nice feature is the one allowing RAW files to be uploaded from a wide variety of digital cameras and Elements will recognise and work with them. The organiser is more basic than that found

in LightRoom but seems more than adequate for the task. At the top right of the screen are four tabs: Organise, Fix, Create, and Share. If you highlight an image in the Organiser and then press the Fix tab, the image opens in the Fix window. If you press the Fix tab without highlighting an image, the Fix window opens allowing you to then search for the image from where you saved the file. You have the choice of "Edit Full", "Edit Quick" and "Edit Guided." These categories are self explanatory. The range of adjustments is not as great as those in Photoshop but is more than adequate for most photographers' needs. All the more common controls such as Levels, Brightness/Contrast, Hue/Saturation, Gradient Map, Crop, Clone, Perspective Control, etc. are all there. Unlike Photoshop, which is aimed at pro-

fessionals, a certain amount of "hand-holding" is there if you want it.

More advanced cameras can allocate either sRGB or Adobe RGB (1998) colour spaces in-camera to the images they produce. If you are producing images for the web then the sRGB colour space is ideal, whilst if you wish to print the image then the Adobe RGB (1998) colour space will be more suited. This is because the latter colour space can deal with more colours and more saturated colours than the former can. Imagine a box containing all the visible colours. The farther from the centre of the box you go, the more saturated the colours become — Red towards one corner, Blue towards another, Green towards the third (the box is not a cube). A colour space can be represented as a balloon blown up inside the box. The space taken up by the balloon is the portion of the total number of visible colours that fall within the particular colour space. Larger balloons contain more colours, or have a larger gamut, while smaller balloons hold fewer colours. The surface of the balloon has the most saturated colours that the colour space can hold. Any colours falling outside the balloon can't be reproduced in that colour space. Since larger colour spaces have larger balloons, they contain both more air volume (i.e. more colours), and the surface of the balloon is farther from the centre of the box (i.e. the colours are more saturated). Therefore, larger colour spaces such as Adobe RGB contain both more colours and more highly saturated colours than smaller spaces like sRGB. A comparison of the Adobe RGB and sRGB gamuts is below. As you can see, working with Adobe RGB allows you to see and print more of most colours.



Adobe RGB was designed to contain the entire colour gamut available from most CMYK printers. sRGB is a HP/Microsoft defined colour space that describes the colours visible on a low end monitor.

Photoshop Elements allows an image which has been tagged with a colour space to be colour managed in everything it does. I would have found it unusable if it did not.

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cheaper image editing programs ignore colour spaces, with the result that the colours they ascribe to the numbers (all images are essentially just lots of numbers whilst held on the computer) are anyone's guesses.

There are many ways of manipulating images in the program: too many to mention them all, but a few interesting ones are the Bluer Skies filter- this improves the colour of the sky in an image, whilst the Toothbrush tool improves the whiteness of a subject's teeth. Another is the Scene Cleaner. Just take several images of a street scene with moving pedestrians and the Scene Cleaner will stack the shots together and subtract the changes between each exposure. Another feature of note is the Exposure Photo-merge which is a tool for producing High Dynamic Range images from several bracketed exposures. This results in images with detail in the deepest blacks and detail in the whitest whites, and is a useful tool to have. In digital photography it is very easy to lose detail in the high-

lights and this is one way of avoiding these burnt out areas in your images.

The Create module enables you to create a photobook, calendar, greetings card, photo prints, etc. I wasn't able to test the photobook facility, since you have to sign up on either Kodak or Shutterfly's sites first. In passing, I have just composed a photobook of some of my images and I used Blurb for this. The composing of the book was very straightforward using a small program downloaded from Blurb. It is not therefore essential to use Elements for this purpose, especially as you have more choice of companies when using the internet.

The Share Tab brings you to various options regarding some uses to which your images can be put, such as making an on-line album, burning to CD/DVD etc. Of course, you can always use the program to print your images!

In Conclusion

I was very impressed with the quality of this program. Whilst it cannot match the

breadth of Light Room plus Photoshop, Photoshop Elements costs a lot less than those two programs. I think I could live with Elements as it seems to be able to do all I require in organising and fixing my images. Having said that, I have to confess that I do not understand why the program runs so slowly. My Windows copy of Photoshop CS 2, also running in Windows XP under Boot Camp on my MacBook Pro, is very much faster!

Pricing & Availability

Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 (PC DVD) has a RRP of £75.81 but is available from Amazon.co.uk for £55.41 inc. VAT and free delivery.

The bundled package of Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 together with Adobe Premiere Elements 8 has a RRP of £114.17, but currently Amazon.co.uk sell the pair bundled together for £85.10 including VAT and free delivery.

Platform

Windows XP, Vista or Windows 7.

Corel Digital Studio 2010

Reviewed by Laurence Fenn

Corel's Digital Studio 2010 suite has four products bundled together. PaintShop Photo for editing your pictures, VideoStudio Express for editing your videos, DVD Factory to burn your pictures/videos and WinDVD to play the movies. Installation gives no choice of the products you want to install and no indication of the space the programs will take. This may part of the process to make the software easier to use, but several other cuts made make the suite ironically a bit more difficult to use. The installation adds shortcuts to PaintShop Photo 2010, VideoStudio 2010, DVD Factory 2010 and WinDVD 2010 to the desktop. It takes just over a gigabyte of hard disc space, when I checked the two directories in Program Files, CorelWinDVD2010 (160 MB) and Corel Digital Studio 2010 (948 MB).



Figure 1: Corel Digital Studio 2010 Desktop Gadget



Start Menu shortcuts include the Corel Digital Studio Desktop Gadget 2010 as well as the programs. This is a launcher that has four icons, Photo (launches PaintShop Photo), Video (launches VideoStudio), Burn (launches DVD Factory) and Play (launches WinDVD). Right clicking the app has two options to Auto Load Gadget (to launch at start up) and exit. As shortcuts are placed on the Desktop and the Start Menu and the Gadget just launches the programs, there is little point in having the gadget at all.

PaintShop Photo 2010

As with all the apps, it uses a non Windows standard interface, but with Help, minimise, restore and close icons on the top right corner. There are two message preferences available from the Help menu, 'Keep me informed with the latest product related messages' and 'Automatically download free product updates and notify before installing'. There is no option to notify before downloading though.

When you register you don't have any details to type in, just a message that registration successfully submitted and you can download the free content. It opens your web browser to download a 15MB IncentivesSetup.exe. I installed the file but didn't know exactly what it added. Some message would have been helpful.

The help opens a web browser with the help files, instead of using the operating system's help interface. This is the same for all of the programs.

The first time the program is run, it searches for media to include in the gallery of folders. If you import pictures from a flash drive it does not scan the folders, so you have to manually browse for them. New folders in the same area appear automatically so you don't have to keep adding them. Importing photos only shows folders on your computer hard drive, not network folders. The thumbnails are almost square, not the actual shape of the photo, so landscape and portrait images look the same.

When editing your photo you can only apply

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the effect using the slider; there is no option to type a value in, unlike PaintShop Pro. There's also no preview thumbnail, which going by the speed some of the effects takes, would have been a help. Some effects do have a small preview though



Figure 2: PaintShop Photo opening gallery with the Create menu shown

Sharing your pictures from the option at the top gives you a choice of Email, Facebook, Flickr or YouTube. Sending a picture via email works with Outlook or Gmail. You choose whether to embed the photo or send it as an attachment, and can select a size of small, medium or large. It gives an estimate of the file size, but not the dimensions. Facebook upload works fine, putting the photos into an album called Corel Uploader Photos on account. Any picture uploaded needs to be approved and can then be seen by others. Flickr works great as well once the Corel program is allowed to upload pictures/videos to your account. Pictures appear in your Photostream.

You can't resize pictures when you edit them, but you can save them with a new name or folder. To resize a picture, you have to select it in the gallery and put it in the media tray (the area at the bottom of the screen). Then you right hand click on the picture there and choose the resize to a new folder option. You choose the folder with a choice of small, medium or large. From a photo that was 3264x2448 this results in a 480x360 (small), 640x480 (medium) or 800x600 (large). You can put the picture in the same folder and it adds a number in brackets to the end of the file name. Why such a simple action as resizing an image is made so complex is beyond me.

Apart from editing photos, you have six options in the Create option: Photo Book, Card, Collage, Calendar, Slideshow and Backup Disc. Creating a photo book does not take account of the shape of the image, i.e. landscape pictures put in portrait frames. The photo can be panned, but it would be better if it automatically put landscape pictures in the correct frames. There are 7 styles (listed under Fun) but one style only shows half a photo on the page.

The Collage project suffers the same problem. You select photos to add to the media tray, which are used in the collage, but pictures are cropped without regard to the original orientation of the photo. Each image can be panned within the frame, or you can change the settings for the program to shrink the picture. If you do this there



Figure 3: Creating a collage

will be a grey background and the frame will not surround just the picture. When you use small pictures a yellow exclamation symbol is shown in the collage, indicating that you may not get a good quality print from the small size.

Creating a calendar uses a style for the images you choose, but you have to select each page and change the style individually (so that's 12 changes). When I created a slideshow it was supposed to be set to fit to the music, but it didn't. The music started again for about a second at the end.

VideoStudio 2010

You can't add titles to a movie if titles are already added. One template has titles at the beginning and the end, but you can only change the font, colour and words. You cannot change the style and cannot delete them. If you create a movie without titles, you can only add one set, which is added over the video, so you can't create a title screen with a plain background. These limits seem annoying as I'm sure it would not make the program more complex to add this ability.

You can trim video clips but it was very slow in setting the frames. You cannot set the frame by inputting a number or time frame, only by moving the start and end markers. You then specify if you want to keep or delete the selected part of the video.

Now you will obviously want to add your own music to the video, but there are problems with that. When I clicked on the button I could browse for mp3 files on my computer, but could not listen to them. The interface lists the details of the music, but anytime I clicked on the preview button I heard nothing. However, when I ticked the music and added it to the video, I could hear it when I previewed the project. You can change the balance between your background music and the soundtrack of the video, and either have the music fit the video (in which case it fades out at the end), or fit the video to the music.

When you are happy with your video you

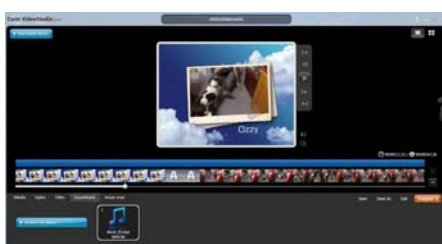


Figure 4: VideoStudio 2010

can save it in a variety of formats: MPEG2 (three quality settings), MPEG4 (iPhone, iPod, Sony PSP, PDA-PMP, Mobile phone), H.264 (1980, 1440, 720 AVCHD), AVI (DV Only), Quicktime (three quality settings), WMV (HD-Best, HD-Better, Broadband, Pocket PC, Smartphone), 3GP (three quality settings). You cannot save in the DivX format.

I tried to Import video grabbed from DVD-RAM which was in widescreen. The MPEG was 720x576 but the aspect setting was wide-screen. VideoStudio did not see the wide-screen setting, so only saw a full screen (squashed) video. I was unable to grab video direct from the DVD-RAM disc with VideoStudio itself. VideoStudio 11 (the predecessor) could not import the video (although it previewed the clips fine) but DVD Movie Factory 7 did manage to import the clips as mpg files without any problems.

For both of the video products, you can preview the video in the opening gallery. Unfortunately it only shows the video in the thumbnail size instead of viewing it in a large screen.

DVD Factory 2010

There are only five 'fun' templates to create your DVD menu, and there is no static thumbnail menu. All the menus have a moving preview. The inability to set the thumbnail picture is not a problem because of this, but I found running a preview of the menu crashed the program on Vista after a few seconds.



Figure 5: Creating a DVD menu in DVD Factory 2010

The projects default to a widescreen NTSC. There was no option to set your country, and therefore set the default to PAL, unlike the last full version of DVD Factory. It only burns to a blank disc although it can make video folders in the same process but you cannot just create the folders. I also found that I could not change the music for the menu. Each template has an mpa file attached for the music, but when I tried to add my own mp3 file and delete the mpa file from the project, it said the music was in use. Even rearranging the order of the music made no difference.

WinDVD 2010

This is a pretty standard DVD/Media player but beware when playing widescreen clips that have a full screen frame. Some DVDs and clips recorded from television use a 720x576 full screen frame, but add a flag to tell the playback device that the clip is in widescreen and should stretch the frame. The default setting of fixed aspect ratio in the settings effec-

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tively ignores this, and will show a squashed in image. Unticking this option means you can pull the size of the window to stretch the viewable area, and when you choose full screen on a widescreen it will stretch to fill the screen.



Figure 6: Capturing frames with WinDVD

The open file dialog appears over the playback window, and gives thumbnails of the videos. The program does not remember the last folder viewed, and if you double click on the file to select it the file will play, but with the open dialog still appearing over the playback window. It also seems to take quite a few seconds to start playing. You can capture a still frame from a video, but instead of just using a key to capture to a file you have to use Tools, then Capture. This brings up a toolbar in the

middle of the playback area with buttons to capture a clip or a picture, and the thumbnails appear underneath as you capture them. It was just a shame that this obscures half of the window. You can access help from the option on the window, but none of the dialogs in the program have context help. If you want to know about a particular setting, you have to search through the help file instead of clicking on a question mark and clicking on the setting in the dialog.

There was an update for the product (even though I had the first release of the software for only a week or so) but I had no idea how large the update was. I later discovered it was 19Mb but after installing it required a reboot at the end. The update then ran again when the computer restarted. I have no idea what it fixed, and the update is not listed on the Corel website at all. If you supply a fix for your program you should give the user a clue to what it actually fixes.

Another feature of the software is the right click option of 'Open with Corel Instant Viewer'. This works exactly the same as the Windows Photo Gallery option in Vista or the Windows Picture and Fax Viewer in XP except it makes the default sound every time you change the photo, and there is no options setting to turn this off. I do not understand why a feature that is available in Windows is added to the suite; it's just duplicating functions.

Conclusions

I may have been expecting too much from the software, but the lack of intelligence in

the way it handles some pictures and videos means you won't get the high quality results you would expect without doing more work. If this suite is meant to provide an easy way of producing photos or videos, the limitations of the programs prevents you from doing this. As each of the programs are cut down versions of the full products, many features are missing. I'm not sure if the products are available separately, but the suite lacks in certain areas. If you run Windows 7 with a touch sensitive screen you can use the interface with your fingers. As I had Vista and a regular laptop I could not try this, and even if I had Windows 7 the screen is a regular one and so would only get grubby fingerprints if I did! I would hope that some of the problems with the suite (inability to preview mp3 files, the slowness of the programs and the way some programs crash when they encounter a file they cannot cope with) will be fixed in an update, but in the version I was trying, I would recommend getting the full versions of the programs individually.

Pricing & Availability

Corel Digital Studio 2010 (PC CD) has a RRP of £59.00, but is currently on offer from Amazon.co.uk for £49.40 inc VAT and free delivery.

Platform

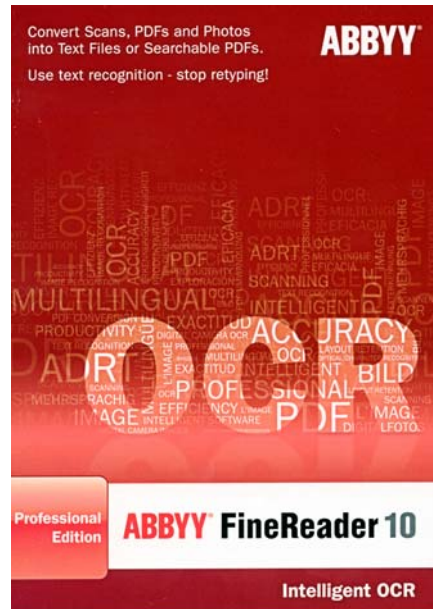
Windows 7 / Vista / XP.

ABBYY FineReader 10

ABBYY FineReader 10 Breaks New Ground in Document Digitisation

ABBYY FineReader 10, is the newest version of ABBYY's professional-level optical character recognition (OCR) application. Delivering the next generations of its two major technologies — ABBYY ADRT (Adaptive Document Recognition Technology) for reproducing multi-page document formatting and Camera OCR, FineReader 10 takes OCR to new heights, driving it beyond traditional text recognition. In combination with its highly intuitive, task-oriented interface, the enhanced technologies bring greater efficiency, simplicity and performance to all scenarios of professional work with documents, for both consumer and business users.

ABBYY FineReader 10 delivers further enhancements in page layout retention, especially on documents with background images (e.g. magazine pages). The new version also provides up to 30-percent increase in text recognition accuracy for Asian languages (e.g. Chinese and Japanese) and up to 20 percent increase for European languages (e.g. English, French,



German, Polish, etc.). In addition, it demonstrates up to 30 percent accuracy improvement on low print quality images such as digital photos and faxes and takes a significant step forward in delivering accurate results on photographs captured with mobile phone cameras. Providing superior accuracy in recognising various types of documents,

FineReader allows users to considerably reduce manual operations while working with documents and facilitates the transition to a paperless environment.

"OCR is one of the key instruments to meet challenges related with document conversion and to build a bridge between paper and digital information," explained Sergey Popov, director of FineReader Products Department at ABBYY. "Keeping pace with the real-world needs in the field of document and information management and exchange, ABBYY focuses the development of FineReader around three major points: core technology innovations, maximisation of user efficiency, and new possibilities for its practical application."

Redefining OCR Technology with 2nd Generation ABBYY ADRT

ADRT is a unique and sophisticated part of ABBYY's OCR technology, responsible for reproducing logical structure and formatting of multi-page documents. Featuring second-generation ABBYY ADRT, FineReader 10 can now accurately re-create the most complex document attributes — including newly-

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added support for table of contents and hierarchical heading structures and the enhanced reproduction of footnotes and styles.

Unlike traditional OCR technology, ADRT does not simply maintain the original look of multi-page documents but intelligently reproduces them as native, fully-formatted Microsoft Office files, preserving logical links between formatting attributes and consistent text flow throughout all pages.

- Increasing Accessibility of OCR — Recognition of Phone Camera Images
- With its third-generation Camera OCR technology, FineReader 10 expands the users' ability of acquiring images for recognition from scanners and standard digital cameras to mobile phone cameras. This makes the advantages of ABBYY OCR technology accessible for a broader audience than before and enables users to capture text and documents at any time and place and while on-the-go. A range of proven image pre-processing features, together with the new functions for correcting image 3D distortions, ISO noise and motion blur, ensure the best possible OCR accuracy on photographed images.
- Maximizing Efficiency with Task-Oriented Document OCR
- In addition to powerful technology enhancements, ABBYY FineReader 10 comes with an updated and highly optimised user interface focused on task-oriented document conversion. The new interface considerably reduces the amount of steps typically required to process a document, bringing more automation, ease-of-use and productivity to everyday work. All the key document conversion tasks are grouped into an intuitive Quick Tasks menu making the conversion of even the most complex documents into editable and searchable files as easy as clicking a button.
- Hands-On Innovation for E-book Readers with Enhanced HTML Export
Providing dramatically enhanced capability to convert images of documents into HTML, FineReader 10 simplifies reading and publishing of electronic books. With the ability to automatically save chapters of a large book as individual HTML files, and

create a table of contents with hyperlinks to the respective chapters and files, readers can easily navigate the chapters without the need to scroll through a long file. FineReader 10 also supports saving of documents as native HTML layouts which can be easily edited, indexed for search, or readily published on a Web site.

ABBYY FineReader 10 is fully compatible with the Microsoft Windows 7 operating system, and offers a range of other new functions and technology enhancements intended to increase user efficiency when working with documents, such as:

- Improved Page Layout Analysis and Retention — New FineReader delivers enhanced capability to analyse and accurately reproduce layout of document pages containing background image items with text areas upon them. It also offers considerably enhanced capability to accurately recognise graphs and charts.
- Enhanced PDF Compression — For more efficient document sharing and to save valuable storage space, ABBYY's advanced MRC compression technology offers powerful capability to optimise the size of output PDFs, reducing it up to 10 times while preserving visual quality.
- New Recognition Languages, Korean and Yiddish — ABBYY FineReader now reads documents in 186 languages, which is the broadest language base ever available for OCR, including multilingual documents with any combination of supported languages.
- Enhanced Export to PDF/A format — Offers four options for saving documents in PDF/A format: "text-under-image", "text-over-image", "text and image", and "image only".

File Input Formats

- BMP — black and white, grey, colour
- PCX, DCX — black and white, grey, colour
- JPEG, JPEG 2000 — grey, colour
- JBIG2 — black and white
- PNG — black and white, grey, colour
- TIFF — black and white, grey, colour (RGB, CMYK), multi-image.
- PDF — any type of PDF
- XPS — Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0 is required
- DjVu — file format for storing com-

pressed scanned images

- GIF — popular image format for Web publishing
- WDP — Windows Media Photo format. WIC or Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0 required.

File Output Formats

Document Saving Formats

- DOC — Microsoft Word Document
- DOCX — Microsoft Word 2007 Document
- XLS — Microsoft Excel Document
- XLSX — Microsoft Excel 2007 Document
- PPTX — Microsoft PowerPoint 2007 Document
- RTF — Rich Text Format
- PDF, PDF/A — text and pictures only, page image only, text over the page image, text under the page image
- HTML
- CSV
- TXT

Image Saving Formats

- BMP — black and white, grey, colour
- TIFF — black and white, grey, colour (RGB, CMYK), multi-image
- PCX, DCX — black and white, grey, colour
- JPEG, JPEG 2000 — grey, colour
- JBIG2 — black and white
- PNG — black and white, grey, colour

ABBYY FineReader 10 (PC CD) is available in three editions (Professional, Corporate and Site License Editions) designed to meet the needs of different user groups and various throughput requirements. FineReader 10 Professional has a RRP of £98.99 incl VAT. For more information about ABBYY FineReader 10, please visit: <http://finereader.abbyy.com>

Pricing & Availability

ABBYY FineReader 10 Professional is currently available from Amazon.co.uk for £89.15 inc VAT and free delivery.

Review to follow.

Acronis True Image Home 2010

New Acronis True Image Home 2010 offers Online Backup and Continuous Data Protection

Solution provides insurance for Windows 7 migration

Acronis recently launched Acronis True Image Home 2010, the latest version of its consumer backup and recovery software. Featuring its patented disk imaging technology, it now protects home computers with round the clock full-system protection, compatibility with Windows 7, and an online

backup option.

Acronis True Image Home 2010 is an essential safety net for users before they migrate to Microsoft Windows 7 operating system. Taking a full backup image with Acronis True

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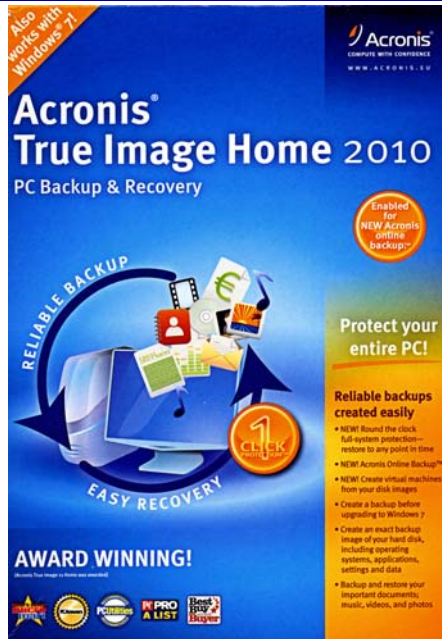
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Image Home 2010 prior to moving to Windows 7 provides the ability to quickly and easily recover the entire PC, including the operating system, applications, updates and files, if a roll back is necessary. In addition, it allows users to easily retrieve data by accessing the Acronis image via Microsoft Windows Explorer. Users can also create a virtual machine from the backup image and run the original Windows operating environment within Windows 7 using software from Microsoft, VMware Inc., or Parallels.

Acronis Nonstop Backup

The new Acronis Nonstop Backup feature offers users total system and data protection through automatic, incremental backups, allowing complete roll back to any point in time. Users can have complete confidence that their entire computer – photos, music, email, and family data as well as operating system, applications, and settings – are protected around the clock. Acronis True Image Home 2010 combines award-winning disk imaging and bare metal restore technology to allow a user to quickly recover from a virus outbreak, unstable software downloads, or failed hard drives.

By enhancing Acronis True Image Home 2010 with the option of backing up files and folders over the Internet to a secure location, Acronis protects users with a single application to manage all backup and



recovery tasks, from creating full images of hard drives to saving specific files and folders online. It is a complementary, automatic, simple, and safe way to back up all important files. The data is secure, saved to a remote location for safekeeping and retrieval.

“People are increasingly storing files, photos, music and valuable personal information including legal and financial data

on their home PCs and laptops, which require adequate protection,” says Laurent Dedenis, Executive Vice President EMEA at Acronis. “With Acronis True Image Home 2010 in place, users can have assurance that their computer is fully protected. Between disk imaging, file backup, local or online backup, and non-stop backup protection, Acronis True Image Home 2010 sets the standard for consumer PC disaster recovery in an affordable and easy-to-use solution.”

Pricing and availability

Acronis True Image Home 2010 is available for download at www.acronis.co.uk and is also available through major retailers. Recommended retail price is £39.95. Acronis Online Backup option – initially available in English, French and German versions across Europe – starts at £3.95 per month for 25 GB of storage. It can be purchased online at <http://www.acronis.eu/homecomputing/products/trueimage/onlinebackup/>.

Currently Acronis True Image Home 2010 (PC CD) is available from Amazon.co.uk for £19.97 inc VAT and free delivery.

Platform

Windows Vista / 7 / XP

Your Editor has a review sample, but it was received too late for a review in this issue of ROM; initial impressions are that it is as good and versatile as its earlier predecessors and at less than £20, a bargain. Review to follow.

Greeting Card Factory Deluxe 7

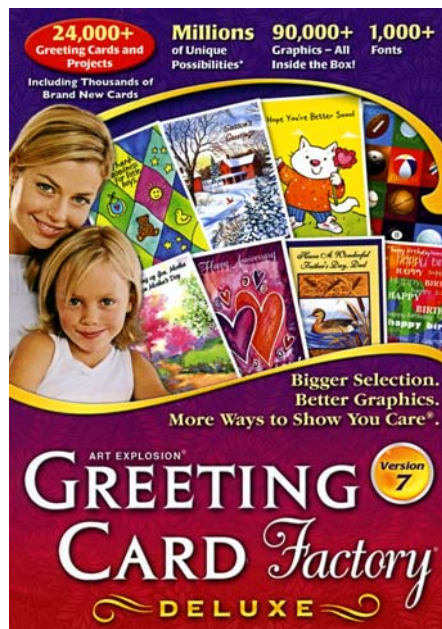
By Tony Hawes

Some readers will know I’m an enthusiastic user of Nova Developments Greeting Card Factory and have been for quite a few years. So when I received an e-mail from Nova Developments that version 8 was available I made enquiries from the UK Distributors / Press Office to see whether a review copy was available. Sadly it was not so. The only version they had for review was version 7, but this was more recent than the one I was using regularly and asked for a review copy for evaluation.

Here is what the press release says about version 7 of the program.

Product Features

- Create customised greeting cards for all occasions with this ultimate collection
- 24,000+ Exclusive Greeting Cards & Customisable Projects - including invitations, stickers, gift tags, certificates, photo greeting cards and more!
- Cards for every occasion: Birthdays, Anniversaries, Graduation, New Baby, Weddings, Christmas, Easter, Father’s Day, Valentine’s Day, and much more!
- Includes 90,000+ Premium Graphics - all included inside the box – no downloading required!



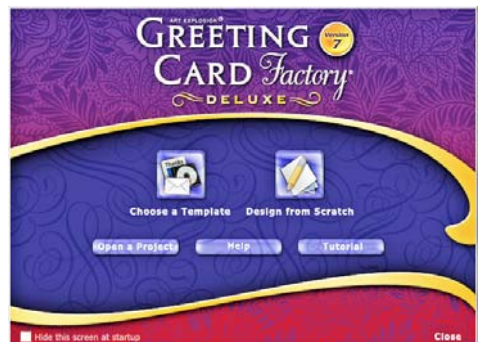
- Over 1000 Creative Fonts – and spectacular text effects to add to your designs
- Advanced Photo Editor - capture, edit and enhance your photos to use in your projects
- Create your own photo calendars using dozens of professionally-designed tem-

plates – add your own digital photos for a personal touch

- Create CD Greeting Cards you can watch at home or send to family & friends
- New Features including thousands of new cards and projects, over 200 new fonts plus thousands of new graphics

In Use

Installation was relatively painless, but took some time, presumably because of the number of templates, graphics, fonts etc that the program needs for its operation.



The opening screen with choices: Choose a Template, Design from Scratch or Open a Project

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

I don't want to write too much so prefer to show in graphic form screen grabs of the steps necessary to create a cheap and personalised Christmas greeting card that easily rivals anything one can buy in the shops.

Opening the program and one is given a choice of choosing a template, design a card from scratch or open a previously created card project.

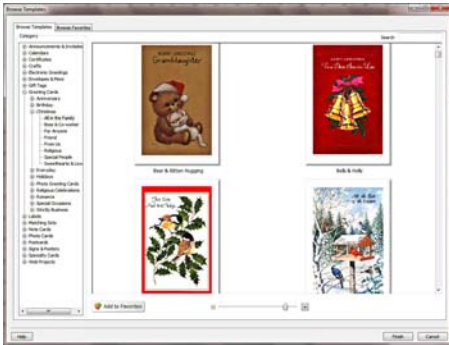


Fig. 2: There are literally hundreds of pre-designed card samples.

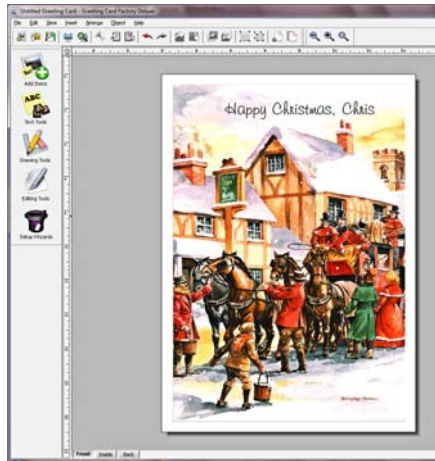


Fig. 3: Here is the one I've selected



Fig. 4: The rather bland interior and greeting

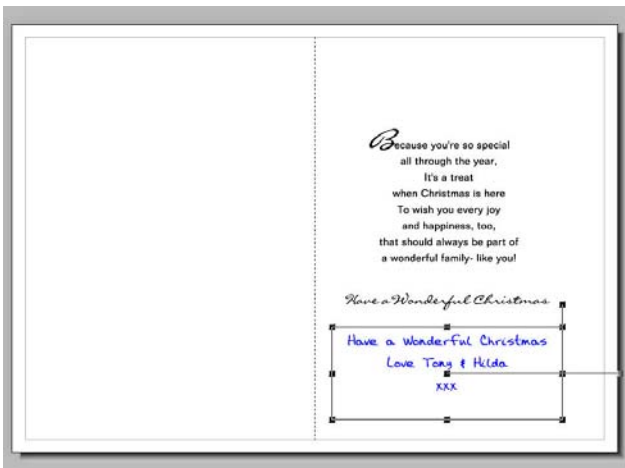


Fig. 6: The card interior with my personalised greeting. All that's necessary is to delete the original "Have a Wonderful Christmas"

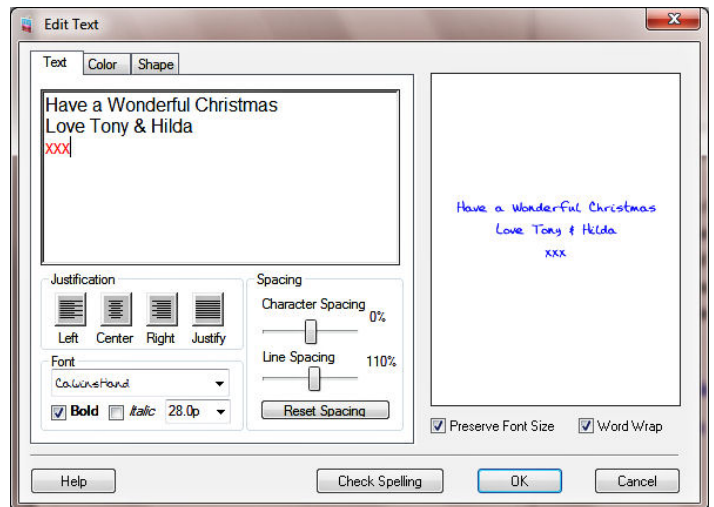


Fig. 5: Here I've inserted my own text, used a handwriting font coloured to blue so it looks like ink to give it an impression of authenticity, centred the text and given it an appropriate weight and size.

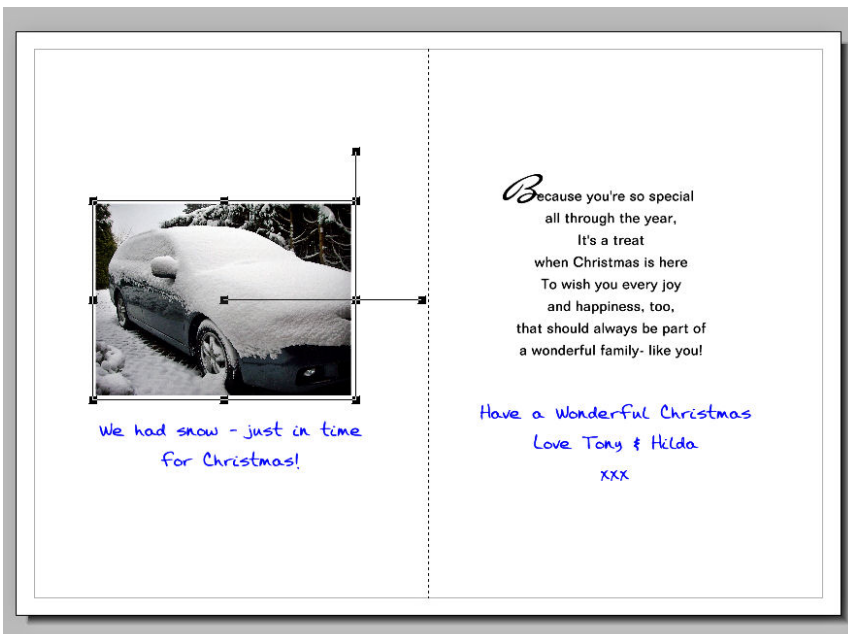


Fig. 7: With the arrival of heavy snow just before Christmas I inserted a photo and a further inscription to complete my card interior — easy peasy!

GREETING CARD FACTORY 7 DELUXE

Pricing & Availability

Greeting Card Factory Deluxe 7 (PC CD) has a RRP of £29.99 and is available from Amazon.co.uk for £17.49 inc VAT and free delivery.

Platform

Windows 7 / Vista / XP

...and finally — seen at Northampton General Hospital



Have a Happy New Year!