Discover the world of Elements add-ons that can help you create artistic masterpieces; make stunning black-and-white images; color correct your photos; and add hundreds of cool effects.

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TOOL TIPS: SELECTION TOOLS

PLUS
Inside Photomerge Exposure Tips and Tricks
Subscriber Showcase
Editor's Note

For those of us living on the West Coast, this is an El Niño year, which means we get some topsy-turvy weather. Here in Oregon, it’s been unusually nice and dry for February: I put about 250 miles on the motorcycle in the past week; I have our sugar snap peas snugly in the ground for spring; and my wife and I have been able to get in some nice long walks around town. Meanwhile, my friends in California have been dealing with the rains that normally soak us in the Northwest. (I do feel kind of bad for them, but hey, I got on my bike in February, so I’m not going to complain.)

These days, I’m carrying my camera around with me a lot more; I’m trying to get out and photograph at least every other day. Some days are better than others, but my big challenge for this year is editing—not in the Photoshop Elements sense, but in the composition and selection sense. I’m trying to do a better job of really analyzing my composition before I snap the shutter, and, on the computer end, I am being more diligent about rating my shots and eliminating the bad ones. It’s a part of the process that we often overlook as photographers, but one that I think is crucial to master if we want to become better artists.

As I mentioned in my January email to subscribers, a good friend of mine, Kelly Turner, has joined us at Photoshop Elements Techniques as Editor. Kelly and I worked together at Macworld, where I got to see her passion, both for digital imaging and for helping people learn. I feel very lucky to have someone of Kelly’s caliber join us, and I think you’ll find that this little magazine of ours will get even better over the coming year.

This month’s cover photo was taken by Jens Langhans of Clovis, California. He took the photo last year in Florence, Oregon, along the Suislaw River (one of my favorite places on the Oregon Coast). He told me in an email, “I was on the prowl for a fishing boat image as part of a watercolor project I was working on. The water was so still that it made for a great image.” Jens processed his photo with Topaz Labs’ Simplify plug-in, one of the add-ons featured in this issue (see page 11).

In fact, you might have noticed that three of the last four cover photos have been from subscribers; we’re keeping a keen eye out for possible covers from the Subscriber Showcase. Our goal is to feature a body copy set in Mundo Sans Pro Regular. Headlines are set in Mundo Sans Pro Medium.

The May/June issue will begin mailing to subscribers around May 10. Enjoy the spring, and don’t forget: keep shooting!

Rick LePage
rick@photoshopelementsuser.com
TOOL TIPS

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Making selective edits is easy when you use Elements’ intelligent selection tools; our guide shows you all you need to know to master them today. By Jeff Carlson

8 Inside Photomerge Exposure
One of Elements 8’s new features is Photomerge Exposure, which lets you build an evenly toned photo from multiple versions. Matt walks you through the basics of the feature’s automatic and manual modes. By Matt Kloskowski

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Plug-ins aren’t just for Photoshop; a number of companies make great add-ons for Elements that let you create works of art, build masks, correct colors, and a whole lot more. By Mike Rodriguez

21 Turn Photos Into Illustrations
Using filters, blend modes, and brushes, you can easily take a photo and make it pop with clean lines and solid color. By Ben Long

25 Create Your Own Digital Stamps
With a few simple steps, you can turn any photo into a custom brush, which you can use over and over again, just like a rubber stamp. By Diana Day

31 Tips & Tricks
Filters and image size; Lighten blend mode and the Healing Brush; pasting with precision; finding the right font; Camera Raw and Bridge (Mac); and more.

34 Subscriber Showcase
Presenting some of the best recent work created by our readers.

What’s Happening Online
Every month, in our exclusive subscriber-only area, we post new videos and tutorials from some of the top Photoshop Elements gurus. Here are the most recent postings:

NEW VIDEOS
- Introduction to HDR (Parts 1-4)
- Elements 8’s Recompose Feature
- Making Subtle Eye Shifts
- Borders From Textures

NEW TUTORIALS
- Creating a Bag Topper
- Making a Pearl Necklace
- Making a Scroll

EXTRAS: LOG ON AT PHOTOSHOPELEMENTSUSER.COM
The Magic Wand tool in Photoshop Elements applies its tricks to a broad area with a single tap. With the tool selected (press W, or choose it from the toolbox), click on an area of your image where you want to make a selection. Elements samples the color of the pixel beneath the cursor and automatically selects a range of similar pixels. This is a great way to quickly grab large areas of a single color, such as when removing the background from a product shot or toning down the color of a bright object in a scene. Just how broad the area of your selection is depends on your settings in the Options Bar at the top of the window.

By Jeff Carlson | I’m not patient when I edit my photos. After identifying the images I want to work on, I get excited to see the final version. So instead of taking the time to pull out some detail or soften the background, I’ll often just apply color adjustments to the whole image and call it good. However, I’m finally breaking myself of that habit because, as it turns out, making selective edits isn’t as difficult or as time-consuming as I once thought. The Magic Wand and Quick Selection tools (and the Selection Brush tool, to a lesser degree) work intelligently so you can spend your time making improvements instead of making selections. Let’s look at the basics of how each tool works.
Tolerance: The Tolerance field lets you set how sensitive the tool is to variations in color. A higher number—up to a maximum of 255—encompasses more pixels with similar values. The default setting of 32 retains a fairly tight area, while numbers below that are good for picking out finer detail, such as the shadow on a leaf or flower.

Anti-Alias: When enabled, the Anti-Alias check box softens the edges of the selection. I typically leave this option turned on to avoid creating sharp edges around whatever effect or adjustment I apply.

Contiguous: Another way to limit or expand your selection is to use the Contiguous option. When this option is turned on, Photoshop Elements limits the selection to areas with similar values that intersect. So it will pick up the colors of a leaf that you click on, but will ignore other leaves with similar colors elsewhere in the photo (unless those leaves are touching). With Contiguous turned off, clicking an area will grab any pixels that match the sample color—even if they're in opposite corners of the image.

Sample All Layers: Normally the Magic Wand tool concerns itself with only the active layer. But if your document has multiple layers—for example, if you're creating a collage—you might find it useful to make an adjustment to similar colors in several different layers. In this case, turning on the Sample All Layers option tells Elements to grab related pixels from all layers of the document and include them in the selection.

Choose the Right Selection Mode
Though they use different icons, each of the tools lets you modify your current selection in useful ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magic Wand Tool</th>
<th>Quick Selection Tool</th>
<th>Selection Brush Tool</th>
<th>Windows Keyboard Shortcut</th>
<th>Mac Keyboard Shortcut</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Magic Wand Icon]</td>
<td>![Quick Selection Icon]</td>
<td>![Selection Brush Icon]</td>
<td>![Windows Keyboard Shortcut]</td>
<td>![Mac Keyboard Shortcut]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tips
- **Start a new selection**
- **Add to selection**
- **Subtract from selection**
- **Intersect with selection**

If you’re having trouble making a selection because the image is speckled with various colors—for example, in a photo suffering from lots of noise—you can turn to the Eyedropper tool for help. With the Eyedropper selected, click on the Sample Size pull-down menu in the Options Bar. Instead of choosing Point Sample, which uses just one pixel as the source for your selection, choose one of the other two options: 3 By 3 Average or 5 By 5 Average. These options analyze a grid of 9 or 25 pixels, respectively, to determine the sample color. This setting is then also used by the Magic Wand tool.
Quick Selection Tool

While the Magic Wand tool has its uses, I find it to be more of a shotgun approach to making selections. When I need to isolate a shape with defined edges, I reach for the Quick Selection tool, which shares a spot in the toolbox with the Selection Brush tool (press A to toggle between the two).

With the Quick Selection tool, you just click and drag the mouse pointer (which becomes a resizable brush icon) across your image and watch the magic happen: the tool evaluates not only similar colors where you’re dragging, but also senses contrasts that are likely to be edges. The selection snaps to detected edges as you move the mouse.

**Selection Options:** Unlike the Magic Wand tool, the Quick Selection brush remains in the Add To Selection mode by default, so you don’t have to try to grab an entire selection in one pass. Grab one portion of your selection, release the button, grab another, and so on. If the tool becomes overzealous in its selection, click the Subtract From Selection button in the Options Bar, or simply hold the Alt (Mac: Option) key and drag the cursor over the selected area you wish to remove. As with the Magic Wand tool, the Sample All Layers option takes all layers into consideration when making a selection.

**Brush Size:** In the Options Bar, you can change the size of the brush to make broader or narrower selections, and set whether the selection has a hard or soft edge.

**Auto-Enhance:** Enabling the Auto-Enhance option produces slightly better results, but at the cost of speed—when you release the mouse button, Elements spends a few seconds evaluating the edge and refining the selection.

**Refine Edges**

When you use the Quick Selection tool or the Magic Wand tool, the controls in the Options Bar apply only if you set them before creating a selection. So if you use a hard-edged brush with the Quick Selection tool, but later decide you want to soften the edge, you might think you have to start over. Not at all. Instead, turn to the Refine Edge button. This brings up a dialog that can alter an existing selection.

The **Smooth slider** removes jagged edges and rounds out the selection. **Feather** applies a soft edge. And the **Contract/Expand slider** reduces or enlarges the selection in percentage increments.

With the **Preview button** enabled, use the sliders to adjust the selection. To get a better look at what’s selected, press F or click the red **Custom Overlay Color** icon at the bottom-left of the dialog to see a red mask over areas not yet selected (visible in the image to the right). You can also press X to temporarily remove the ‘marching-ants’ border around the selection.
Selection Brush Tool

The Magic Wand and Quick Selection tools automatically make selections based on calculations, but sometimes you want manual control. For example, those tools can select most of the hair on a person’s head, but aren’t as good at teasing out detailed strands. With the Selection Brush tool active, you can paint an area to create a selection (or to deselect an area) with more precision.

Brush Options: Press A to switch between the Quick Selection and Selection Brush tools. In the Options Bar, you can choose from any brush size and style, as well as a Hardness setting, and paint as if you were using the Brush tool. In fact, if you primarily use Photoshop Elements with a digital pen and tablet, you may find the Quick Selection Brush more comfortable for making detailed selections.

Mask/Selection Mode: If you’re having trouble seeing which parts of your image are included in the selection, choose Mask from the Mode pull-down menu. This mode uses a red overlay to indicate areas that have not been selected. You can use the Overlay setting to adjust the opacity of the red—helpful if you need to get a better look at your image. Paint over any areas that you want excluded from your selection, and then switch back to Selection mode.

As you become more proficient with Elements, you’ll probably find yourself using a combination of all these tools to refine your selections. Once done, you can apply all sorts of selective adjustments to your photos—all in far less time than it would have taken had you tried to use the Lasso and Marquee tools.

By switching to Mask mode, you can use a red overlay as your guide when painting your selection. The area in red is not part of the selection.

Essentials

 TOOL TIPS

Here’s a faster method of changing the brush size (in fact, this works with any brush-based tool): press and hold Ctrl-Alt (Mac: Control-Option) and then click and drag left or right. That saves a trip to the Options Bar.

By Matt Kloskowski  One of the new features that debuted in Photoshop Elements 8 is Photomerge Exposure. It’s designed to let you use multiple photos taken of a scene—some darker, some lighter—and merge them to create an evenly toned photo with a broad range of shadow and highlight detail. When Adobe first announced this, some people thought that Exposure would let you create high dynamic range photos (HDR), that cool-looking effect you get with programs like Photomatix Pro. Well, Photomerge Exposure isn’t HDR, but it can help improve your photos. Here, I’ve chosen two image types—a landscape and a portrait—to show you the basics of how it works, in Automatic and Manual modes.

First Stop: Automatic Mode

1  Open the photos you’re going to merge together. You can see below a few photos I have taken of the same subject. When taking the photos I set my camera on a tripod and just changed the exposure settings to capture one photo with lots of visible detail in the shadows up front (even though the sky looks really bright) and one photo with lots of detail in the highlight areas such as the sky (even though the foreground is dark). The third one is right in the middle.

2  Ctrl-click (Mac: Command-click) to select all three photos in the Project Bin at the bottom. Go to the File menu and choose New>Photomerge Exposure.

EXTRAS: LEARN ABOUT HDR

If you’re interested learning more on exposure blending and high dynamic range photos—including Photomatix Pro—don’t miss Matt’s four-part series, “Understanding HDR,” in the Subscriber Videos area at PhotoshopElementsUser.com
A new window will open, with your composite (final) image. In the Photomerge Exposure panel on the right side of the screen, you’ll see two tabs: Automatic and Manual. With Automatic mode, Elements has taken what it believes are the best parts of each photo and blended them together.

Automatic has two options, Simple and Smart Blending. Check the Simple Blending button first; you might find that it’s good enough. If you’re happy with the results, just click Done. If not, move on to Smart Blending, which adds some settings you can use to get a better final image.

Smart Blending gives you more control over the shadows and highlights and how bright or dark they appear. That’s a good thing and a bad thing depending on the photo. In this example, I thought the sky was a little too bright so I moved the Highlights slider toward the right to darken them and tone down the sky a bit.

The same thing goes for the shadows. If you leave them too bright, your final photo can look fake, so moving the Shadows slider toward the left will darken them, making them more realistic. There will be times when you’ll find that the shadows aren’t bright enough, in which case you’ll need to move the Shadows slider to the right to brighten them. Also, keep an eye on the Saturation of the photo. Sometimes they become too saturated so feel free to pull back on that slider just a little (which I did for my final image).

When the preview image is looking the way you like it, click Done, and Elements will build a new file with your blended photo. For many images—especially if you used a tripod—you’ll find that Photomerge Exposure’s Auto mode works just great. Now, let’s look at the Manual mode.
Use Manual Mode with Portraits

I’ve found that Photomerge Exposure’s Manual mode works really well with portraits. In the example here, I took two shots, one with a nice dark and saturated background, the other with a much better exposure of the faces of the mother and daughter (the before and after are shown below). I knew I could use Photomerge Exposure to help create a nicely blended final photo (shown on the right).

1 I selected both photos and chose New>Photomerge Exposure, but this time went straight to the Manual tab. Here, Elements starts you out with one photo on the left side—the Foreground—and your second photo in the Project Bin at the bottom. Simply drag that second image (or your favorite of the group, if you use more than two) into the empty Background window on the right. This will be your final composite photo.

2 The key to Manual mode is the Selection tool on the right side. The idea here is to draw over parts of the foreground photo that you want to appear in the final image. In my example here, I just scribbled over the subjects’ faces, since that’s the main area I wanted to keep.

As you brush with the Selection tool, Elements will update the image on the right to incorporate your changes. If you go a little too far with your brush strokes, switch to the Eraser tool to undo your strokes.

3 A big sign that you’ve retouched a photo is the fact that the people in it may appear too bright. If that’s the case—as it was here—then try dragging the Transparency slider toward the right to about 25. That lessens the effect and blends the dark and bright images together for a more realistic result. Lastly, if you see jagged edges then turn on Edge Blending and that will help smooth them.

Boost Your Elements Experience with Plug-Ins

By Mike Rodriguez

Photoshop Elements is really quite amazing; its tools, filters, and features empower the aspiring photographer, the scrapbooker, and nearly everyone in between. Sometimes, though, Elements’ tools aren’t enough to get the job done. In these cases, many people think the only alternative is to “move up” to Elements’ big (and more expensive) brother, Photoshop. But before you leap into that complex world, you might want to check out the world of plug-ins.

These add-ons are bundles of extra functionality that can increase or enhance the capabilities of Elements. Some plug-ins expand Elements’ color-correction or black-and-white conversion features, while others give you better selection tools. And, if you’re looking to turn your photos into works of Impressionist-style art (or other types), there are a slew of effects plug-ins that can help bring out your inner artist.

There are many free and commercial plug-ins available for Elements; some of them can cost more than Elements itself, but the features they add can truly supercharge your photos (and still at a fraction of the cost of Photoshop). Here, we focus on four of the biggest plug-in developers: Topaz Labs, Nik Software, onOne Software, and Alien Skin Software. Each offers a range of plug-ins for both Windows and Mac users. For a more comprehensive list of plug-in developers, check out the Subscriber Extras section at PhotoshopElementsUser.com.
Topaz’s interface, with its multitude of sliders and settings, is very similar across all of their plug-ins (Topaz Adjust is shown here). You can choose from plenty of presets—shown in the panel on the left—and even save your own. The preview window quickly shows you the effects of your adjustments as you make them.

One of the most popular and recognizable plug-in developers among Elements enthusiasts is Topaz Labs. Their stable of seven plug-ins for Elements ranges from the practical to the creative with extremely reasonable prices (under $80).

All of Topaz’s plug-ins have a similar interface, which makes moving between the products fairly intuitive. Some of the controls’ titles can be cryptic, but there are numerous presets that offer a one-click-and-you’re-done option, or which can serve as a starting point for further experimentation.

Looking at all of Topaz’s plug-ins could take up the entire magazine. Here, we’ll focus on two of the most popular ones—Topaz Adjust and Topaz Simplify—but it’s worth exploring some of their other titles as well:

- If you spend a lot of time in Elements making selections, take a look at Topaz ReMask, which simplifies the selection/masking process. The company recently updated ReMask to version 2, and many people in the Elements Village forums swear by the update as the best way to make complex selections and masks inside Elements.

- Topaz Detail focuses solely on enhancing the detail in your images, adding depth and sharpness without creating halos or sharpening artifacts.

- Another detail-enhancing plug-in, Topaz Clean, is a counterbalance to Detail, working on smoothing rather than sharpening.

- Two other plug-ins, Topaz DeNoise and Topaz DeJPEG, reduce digital camera noise and compression artifacts from JPEG images, respectively.
TOPAZ ADJUST

Do you have an image in your digital shoebox crying out for some pop or exposure enhancement? Or, do you want that otherworldly, high dynamic range (HDR) effect with glowing color and expanded tones? Topaz Adjust will do all that—from subtle to extreme. The plug-in gives you complete control over the exposure, detail, and color in an image. Use the sliders to perform subtle corrections, or go bold and produce vivid HDR-style effects using only one image (instead of the multiple exposures required to produce a traditional HDR image).

The plug-in offers presets that can be used as starting points, or you can begin from scratch for full control over the adjustment options. The four tabs at the bottom of the screen (seen on page 12)—Exposure, Detail, Color, and Noise—provide a built-in workflow for making adjustments. You can choose to use all or just some of the controls; which settings you use will depend largely on the image and personal preference. Experimenting with each of the controls is a great way to see exactly what is possible with this filter, and the Preview window shows your adjustment changes very quickly. Whether it is small corrections and adjustments you’re after, or more creative effects, Topaz Adjust is a nice tool to have.

TOPAZ SIMPLIFY

A fabulous art teacher I know insists everyone has the ability to draw (and judging from the quality of her students’ work, I’m a believer). However, a plug-in like Topaz Simplify sure makes it easier. When the artistic side of you calls, explore the tools and controls in Simplify, which make the process of transforming your photos into works of fine art. Like the other Topaz plug-ins, you can choose from various preset styles, including oil or watercolor painting, pencil sketches, and wood carving. You can accept the presets as they are, or use them as a starting point for your own experimentation with the many sliders in the Simplify, Adjust, and Edge categories. And, of course, you can always start from scratch to create your own look and save it for future use as a custom preset. (The image on this month’s cover, by Jens Langhans, was processed using Topaz Simplify’s BuzSim setting.)
Are you a photographer who sees in black and white? Do you want better monochrome conversion tools inside Elements? Are you looking to apply creative filters, or to have pinpoint control over toning and color correction? Then check out Nik Software, which makes three plug-ins for Photoshop that also work with Photoshop Elements. Nik’s plug-ins are pricier than some of the others shown here, but they are all excellent at their core tasks, and give you broad editing power that even Photoshop can’t match.

Nik’s plug-ins use a technology known as U-Point, which is a very simple way of applying selective adjustments to part of an image via control points. You can add multiple points anywhere in an image, each with its own set of sliders and area controls. Adjustments are applied only within the control area and only to pixels similar to those under the control point. It’s one of those things that, once you see it in action, makes perfect sense.

For color-correction and lighting control, Nik’s Viveza 2 is a great time-saving tool, especially if you find yourself constantly using selective editing techniques on your images. Color Efex Pro, which comes in three versions (Standard, Select, and Complete) produces great photographic effects from cross-processing to bleach and portrait softening effects. But my favorite of the group is Silver Efex Pro, which lets me produce stunning black-and-white images.

Tips for using plug-ins effectively

Plug-ins, whether the ones mentioned here, or others, are generally easy to install and use. Most plug-ins get added to Elements’ Filter menu, although some include a palette that lets you quickly invoke a plug-in. Here are a few things to think about when using plug-ins:

- All of the companies mentioned here have extensive video tutorials on their Web sites showing how to get the most out of their plug-ins. They’re a great way to master the basics of a plug-in quickly.
- Many, but not all, plug-ins automatically add a new layer with the finished effect. If your plug-in doesn’t add a layer, just duplicate your background layer by pressing Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J) and run the plug-in on that layer, so you don’t lose your original image.
- Using effects on duplicated layers lets you fade an effect (by using the layer’s Opacity slider). You can also use blend modes to merge your original with the filtered result, or use the Eraser tool to remove filtered areas you might not want in your final image.
- You don’t need to run an effect on your whole image; if you make a selection before opening a plug-in, the effect will only apply to the selected area.
- More is not always better. While some of the effects that these plug-ins produce can be pleasing, it can get a bit tiresome if you’re always using the same effect on your images. Play around, but don’t always go for the ‘extreme’ look. Your audience will appreciate it. —Rick LePage
SILVER EFEX PRO

Sure, Elements offers several ways to convert color images to black and white, but this plug-in takes the process to a whole new level. Making global adjustments to an entire image is a simple process involving three sliders (Brightness, Contrast, and Structure) and you can selectively adjust areas of an image with control points.

Silver Efex Pro has a thorough menu of film options that mimic the grain and contrast of many black-and-white films, such as Kodak 100 TMAX Pro and Agfa APX 400. You can adjust the film grain, sensitivity in the different color channels, and make pinpoint tonal changes with a Curves control. There are controls for color toning your image, with presets ranging from sepia to blue tones, and other presets for creating alternative photo styles, such as tin types and pinholes.

If you’re truly interested in the creative avenues provided by black-and-white photography in the digital age, Silver Efex Pro can’t be beat.
onOne Photo Essentials 3 is actually a bundle of five plug-ins, all based around onOne’s Plug-in Suite 5 for Photoshop. It includes components that are aimed at both practical and artistic uses. [Editor’s note: onOne Software and Photo One Media, which publishes Photoshop Elements Techniques, are sister companies.]

- **Make It Better** performs color and tone correction in a way unlike many other programs. It’s like a virtual trip to the eye doctor; you run your image through a series of color, luminance, and sharpening steps. In each step, you adjust a single slider and select which one of two previews looks best to you, and Make It Better does the rest.

- **Cut It Out** is an isolation specialist; the plug-in uses sophisticated color detection to help you extract a subject from its background. Many people in the forums prefer Topaz’s ReMask 2 to Cut It Out, but it’s a good tool, and you get it free with Essentials.

- **Enlarge It** takes a small, lower-resolution image and produces an enlarged image suitable for a large print. It’s not going to take a tiny image off the Internet and make it big and sharp, but it can really help you when you want to create a poster from a digital camera photo, or get a larger print from a tightly cropped photo.

With last fall’s release of Essentials 3, onOne added one new module, **Make It Cool**, and significantly updated another module, **Frame It**. Let’s take a closer look at those two.

**MAKE IT COOL**

Make It Cool applies professional-quality effects to your images, categorized into seven areas: image optimization; portrait retouching; black-and-white conversion; photo filters; film, darkroom and special effects; and artistic. You can add multiple effects to an image in Make It Cool’s Stacks palette, rearrange their order, and fade different ones (much like Elements’ Layers palette). The interface is clean and straightforward to use, making it easy to experiment with different looks (you can also save presets). Overall, Make It Cool lives up to its name quite well.

Photo Essentials 3’s Make It Cool has more than 40 built-in presets, including an Orton-style effect (shown above).
## Selected Elements Plug-ins for Windows and Mac

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<th>COST</th>
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<td>Alien Skin Software</td>
<td><strong>Snap Art 2</strong></td>
<td>$199</td>
<td>Artistic effects</td>
<td>Elements 6-8 (Windows); Elements 4-8 (Mac)</td>
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<td>alienskin.com</td>
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<td><strong>Bokeh</strong></td>
<td>$199</td>
<td>Focus (depth of field) manipulation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exposure 2</strong></td>
<td>$249</td>
<td>Film-simulation effects</td>
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<td><strong>Image Doctor 2</strong></td>
<td>$199</td>
<td>Photo retouching and repair</td>
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<td><strong>Eye Candy 6</strong></td>
<td>$249</td>
<td>Design effects (3-D, bevels, and more)</td>
<td>Elements 7-8 (Windows); Elements 6-8 (Mac)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nik Software</td>
<td><strong>Silver Efex Pro</strong></td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>Black-and-white conversion</td>
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<tr>
<td>niksoftware.com</td>
<td><strong>Color Efex Pro 3</strong></td>
<td>$100 – Standard $160 – Select $300 – Complete</td>
<td>Photographic-style filters</td>
<td>Elements 4-8 (Windows/Mac)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Viveza 2</strong></td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>Selective editing, without masking</td>
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<tr>
<td>onOne Software</td>
<td><strong>Photo Essentials 3</strong></td>
<td>$70</td>
<td>Bundle of five plug-ins, covering masking, frames, photo effects, color correction, enlargements</td>
<td>Elements 6-8 (Windows/Mac)</td>
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<td>ononesoftware.com</td>
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<td>Topaz Labs</td>
<td><strong>Adjust 3</strong></td>
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<td>topazlabs.com</td>
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<td><strong>DeNoise 3</strong></td>
<td>$80</td>
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<td><strong>Detail 2</strong></td>
<td>$40</td>
<td>Detail enhancement</td>
<td>Elements 1-8 (Windows); Elements 6-8 (Mac)</td>
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<td><strong>Simplify 2</strong></td>
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<td>Artistic effects</td>
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<td><strong>Clean 2</strong></td>
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<td>Smoothing and edge manipulation</td>
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<td><strong>Simplify 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Clean 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ReMask 2</strong></td>
<td>$70</td>
<td>Masking and extraction tools</td>
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<td><strong>DeJPEG 3</strong></td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>Remove JPEG artifacts</td>
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<td><strong>Topaz Bundle</strong></td>
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<td>Bundle of Adjust, DeNoise, Detail, Simplify, Clean 2, ReMask, DeJPEG</td>
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FRAME IT

When it’s time for that finishing touch, Frame It moves to center stage in the Photo Essentials 3 show. With a plethora of frames, backgrounds, layouts, and designs, the Frame It Library is your first stop when you launch the plug-in. The Library works much like a photo browser, showing a thumbnail preview of your image within the various frame options. Use the All Items option to see all of the Library’s contents, or choose from the list of categories on the left to narrow your search.

Once you’ve decided on a frame, click the Add Frame button in the lower right corner to enter the main workspace. Here is where you customize the look of your frame. You’ll find options to adjust size, edge, and bevel characteristics; to change background color or transparency; as well as add different border, glow, and shadow effects.

Like Make It Cool, Frame It also uses stacks to build the framing effects, which makes it possible to stack multiple frames. Simply return to the Library by clicking the Open Library button in the lower right area of the screen. Choose a different frame from the Library, click Add Frame, and a second frame is added to the stack in the workspace. Drag the different frames within the Stacks palette to change the stacking order and produce different effects, and, like Make It Cool, you can save frame presets for future use.

Essentials 3’s Frame It makes adding professional edge effects and frames a simple matter of drag and drop, with plenty of customization options that let you give your photos a unique presentation.
Alien Skin’s versatile collection of plug-ins includes ones that provide realistic effects and others designed to tap into your artistic creativity:

- **Bokeh** creates that lovely, shallow depth-of-field look, blurring the background and emphasizing your subject. It’s a really nice alternative to those ultra-expensive prime lenses.
- **Image Doctor 2** includes five filters designed to help repair problematic images, including Smart Fill (for removing background elements); Blemish Concealer and Skin Softener (for portrait retouching); Dust & Scratch Remover; and JPEG Repair.
- **Exposure 2** applies traditional photographic effects, from conversion to black and white, to adding some pop and color punch, to simulating various films, including popular cross-processing and toy-camera effects.
- **Eye Candy 6** is aimed at designers and others who frequently work with logos, text, buttons and other graphic elements for Web sites or print use.

In my opinion, Alien Skin’s coolest plug-in, and the one with the highest fun factor, is **Snap Art 2**, which tops the charts for artistic-style effects. (Turn the page for more.)
SNAP ART 2

Snap Art is ideal for transforming your photos into works of fine art. Ten artistic styles are included with the program: Colored Pencil, Comics, Impasto, Oil Paint, Pastel, Pen and Ink, Pencil Sketch, Pointillism, Stylize, and Watercolor. All of these styles can be used as starting points, and can be customized via several groups of controls, which include brush strokes, colors, canvas characteristics, and lighting.

Filters are generally applied globally to an image, but you can also use “focus points,” which let you identify areas of your image where you want to apply less of an effect to retain more detail (such as a person’s facial features in a portrait).

Snap Art is one of those tools that works great with layers and blend modes for adding depth to your photos, or it can stand alone in creating vibrant works of art. Like many of the artistic plug-ins, a little bit can go a long way, but Snap Art has an amazing amount of depth under the hood.

We’ve given you a small taste of a few of the many plug-ins available for Photoshop Elements. One great thing about this group is that they all work with recent versions of Elements—Windows and Mac—and all of the companies have demo versions available for you to test. So hop online, download a few to play with, and see how you can turbocharge your Elements experience!

For an extensive list of links to plug-ins for Elements (including many free ones), go to the Subscriber Extras area at PhotoshopElementsUser.com

Mike Rodriguez holds a masters degree in Educational Technology and is an Adobe Certified Expert and Instructor in Photoshop CS4. He has over 17 years of classroom teaching experience and teaches courses in beginning photography and a variety of computer applications. In addition to his writing and video tutorials, he also sells stock photography through iStockphoto.com.
I've exaggerated the strong lines and bold colors in this photo to create an image that looks more like an illustration—while maintaining the realistic perspective, detail, and geometry of the original.

By Ben Long | As photographers, we embrace the concept that “less is more.” From the moment we lift our cameras to our eyes, we’re making decisions about what to exclude from the frame. While editing, we further reduce extraneous elements by cropping, adding a vignette, or using the Clone Stamp tool to paint out specific objects. The goal of all of this work is to reduce visual clutter and keep the viewer’s attention focused on the subject of the photo.

But sometimes, even after all of this effort, a photo might still be too busy for your liking. In these cases, one effective solution is to simplify the image down to a smaller range of colors, similar to an illustration. Although this technique is surprisingly simple, it requires a bit of time and patience. You’ll end up painting over much of your photo by hand. But once you get the hang of it, you’ll find that the creative possibilities are endless.

1 I recommend starting with a photo that is no larger than 2000 pixels on its longest side. If the image has too much data, it’ll be harder to create strong lines. This means you may need to downsample your image.

Open the photo in Elements, and choose Image > Resize > Image Size. Make sure the Resample Image option is checked. Now examine the Pixel Dimensions section. If the longest side is more 2000 pixels, change the number to 2000 and click OK. (Once you’re comfortable with this technique, you may be able to experiment with larger image sizes, if needed.)

EXTRAS: GET THIS IMAGE

You can follow along by downloading this image from the Subscriber Extras area at PhotoshopElementsUser.com
2 We need to beef up the edges in the image and turn them into strong black lines. To keep these new lines separate from the color—so we can work on both independently—we'll duplicate the background on a new layer. In the Layers palette, drag the Background layer to the Create New Layer icon, which resembles a turned page. (The New Layer icon is located at the top of the Layers palette in versions before Elements 8.)

3 Click on the new layer (Background copy) in the Layers palette. Then set the foreground color to black by clicking on the Default Foreground and Background Colors icon at the bottom of the toolbox (or press D).

4 Next, we'll reduce this layer to only strong black lines. Choose Filter > Sketch > Photocopy. Depending on the amount of contrast in your image, you may need to adjust the Detail and Darkness sliders in the Photocopy filter to make the lines appear dark and thick. (I set the Detail slider to 8, and the Darkness slider to 35.) As you adjust the sliders, you'll pick up some extra texture in the image. Don't worry, you can remove it later. When you're happy with the lines, click OK. Your image will look like a black-and-white photocopied image.

5 Now we want to bring the color back into the image. We'll do this by combining the black-and-white layer with the layer below it. In the Layers palette, click on the Blending Mode menu (which currently says Normal) and choose Multiply from the pop-up menu. All of the white pixels in the upper layer will be replaced with color pixels from the lower layer.
Now comes the time-consuming part. We're going to paint over the original image by applying color to this empty layer. Select the Brush tool (B), and then hold down the Alt (Mac: Option) key to turn the cursor into an eyedropper. Click on a color in your image you'd like to paint with; this will set the color as your foreground color.

With the new, empty layer selected in the Layers palette, you can now paint over a portion of your image with the selected color. Because Elements applies the paint underneath the black lines, you don't have to be too careful when painting. If your brush overlaps with some of the black lines, the spillover will most likely be hidden.

Each time you move to a new object, pick a new color for your brush. Keep in mind that you have a fair amount of creative latitude. You can change the color of objects, add or remove highlights and shading, and so on. Also, because the color is in its own layer, you can easily repaint or erase places that you've messed up.

We've managed to get the strong lines we were looking for; however, the trolley has a lot of subtle shading in it, making it look more photorealistic than we'd like. To further simplify the image, we'll replace these areas of subtle color shifts with simple flat color.

To do this, create a new layer. In the Layers palette, click on the Background layer to select it, and then click the Create A New Layer icon (or choose Layer>New Layer). This will create a new, empty layer between the Background layer (where your original image is) and the photocopied layer (where the black lines are).

If your image starts looking a little strange, it's probably because some of the photorealistic areas have not yet been touched. Areas containing gradients and highlights will look especially “real”; so be sure to repaint all of those. For example, in my image, I had to be diligent about repainting the subtle chrome highlights around the windows.

Here is an in-progress snapshot of the painting. Note that the colors are much flatter in the image on the right.
Have Some Fun

I originally developed this technique when I was hired to produce a series of posters of fake magazine covers for an improvisational theater company. After staging the scene with the actors and photographing it, I then composite the actors with other backgrounds, and apply this technique to create a comic book look. To read more about the process—and see additional examples—go to www.completedigitalphotography.com/?p=81

On the left side of this image, I’ve used the Eraser tool to delete any unwanted black marks from the photocopy layer.

The Photocopy filter often adds extra texture to your image, and doesn’t always create perfectly hard-edged lines. To clean up this extra clutter—and simplify your lines—click on the layer containing the black-and-white photocopied image in the Layers palette (it should be the topmost layer). Using the Eraser tool (E), scrub away any extra texture. You can then use the Brush tool (B) to paint over lines that have soft edges or that are too thin.

When you’re done, you should be left with a simplified version of your original photo.

Some of the lines in your image may denote the edges between highlight and shadow areas—not between objects. These lines can almost always be completely erased.

Ben Long is a photographer and trainer based in San Francisco. He is the author of Complete Digital Photography (Charles River Media) and Getting Started With Camera Raw (Peachpit Press). For more photo advice, go to www.completedigitalphotography.com.
Create Your Own Digital Stamps

By Diana Day | If you’ve admired the expensive rubber stamps at your local craft store, you’ll be happy to know that Photoshop Elements makes it easy to create your very own digital stamp collection. With a few simple steps you can turn any photo or graphic into a custom brush, which you can then use over and over again like a rubber stamp. And unlike the real-world version, you can instantly change the size and color of your digital stamps as you’d like. This makes them great for adding decorative elements to scrapbook pages and greeting cards, stamping a watermark or signature on your artwork, or just having fun.

1 Choose a high-resolution photo you’d like to turn into a brush. I’ll use a close-up of my granddaughter, Hayden. Since you’ll end up simplifying the photo to a two-tone image, you’ll have the most success using a simple image with strong contrast between the subject(s) and the background. To prevent altering your original photo, choose File>Save As, save the file as a Photoshop (.PSD) file, and rename it.

2 If you don’t want to use the entire photo as your stamp, select the Crop tool (C), drag out a selection containing only the area of the image you want, and then click the green checkmark.
Elements limits the size of a brush to no more than 2500 pixels on its longest side. To check your cropped image size, select **Image > Resize > Image Size**. In the Image Size dialog, make sure the Resample Image option is checked. Look at the pixel dimensions at the top of the dialog; if the largest dimension is more than 2500 pixels, reduce it to 2500. You can enter a smaller size if you wish, but I recommend using the largest size possible; you can always make the brush smaller when you use it.

You’re now ready to get to work. In the Layers palette, **Alt-double-click (Mac: Option-double-click)** anywhere on the Background layer, which will unlock it. The layer will be renamed Layer 0.

To keep your stamp from becoming too cluttered, select and delete everything but the subject. (If the background is a light, solid color with sufficient contrast between the subject and background, you may get by with skipping this step.) There are many ways to remove background elements. I’ve used the Polygonal Lasso tool (for tips, you can follow my tutorial, “Easy Selections with the Polygonal Lasso,” in the May/June 2009 issue).

Duplicate Layer 0 by pressing **Ctrl-J (Mac: Command-J)**. This will give you a layer called Layer 0 copy. Then turn off the visibility of Layer 0 by clicking on the eye icon beside that layer. This will preserve the original image in case you need to start over.
Next, create a Threshold adjustment layer. With the duplicate layer (Layer 0 copy) highlighted in the Layers palette, select **Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Threshold**, then click OK. This will convert the image to black and white. Using the Threshold dialog (located below the Layers palette in Elements 8), adjust the slider to maintain enough details to identify the subject.

Merge the adjustment layer with the layer below it. With the Threshold adjustment layer highlighted, choose **Layer>Merge Down**, or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-E (Mac: Command-E).

Finding the sweet spot in the Threshold dialog that gives you good detail in both the bright areas and dark areas of your image can be difficult—if not impossible. But if you have extra time and patience, you can solve this problem by creating multiple Threshold layers—each set to provide detail in a different portion of the image. You then combine the best parts of each layer to create a finished image with improved detail. To see my step-by-step tutorial, go to the Subscriber Extras section online and read “Combine Threshold Layers.”

PhotoshopElementsUser.com
Now we’ll define our brush. Make sure only the layers you need are visible by clicking on the eye icon to the left of unneeded layers. If you want to define only a portion of your image, use the Marquee tool (M) or Lasso tool (L) to select the area you want included. Choose Edit>Define Brush. If this option is grayed out in the menu, it means your image is too large and you’ll need to downsize it (see Step 3). In the Brush Name dialog, type in a name for your brush, and then click OK.

If you’re pleased with your stamp, you can skip to Step 10 and convert it to a brush. But there’s no reason you have to stop here; you can add text, decorative embellishments, or a frame before converting it to a brush. Experiment with different elements until you get a unique design all your own. For example, to finish my design, I’ve added a negative film frame from a PNG file and some text. (Go to the Subscriber Extras page online for a link to the frame and font I’ve used.)

To make room for the additional elements, you may need to expand the canvas (choose Image>Resize>Canvas Size). Just remember that your finished image can’t be larger than 2500 pixels. So when you’re done, repeat Step 3 to make sure you’re not over the limit.

You can now try out your new brush by selecting the Brush tool (B) and scrolling to the end of the active Brushes palette.
Finding an Edge

When you add the Threshold adjustment layer in Step 7, you may find that the edges of your subject—for example, the top of someone’s head or the edge of a sleeve—disappear. If this happens, you can give them a little more definition by applying a thin stroke to the selection.

Once you’ve merged the adjustment layer in Step 8, insert these steps. (Note that this trick will only work if you’ve followed Step 5 and deleted the background of the photo.)

1 In the Layers palette, create a new blank layer (Layer>New>Layer) above Layer 0 copy.

2 With the new layer selected, Ctrl-click (Mac: Command-click) on the thumbnail of Layer 0 copy to pick up its selection. Layer 1 should still be highlighted in the Layers palette, but you should now see marching ants around your subject.

3 Choose Edit>Stroke (Outline) Selection. In the Stroke dialog, set the Width to 1 pixel, the Color to black, and the Location to Inside. When you click OK, a thin line should appear around your selection. If you’re having trouble seeing it, press Ctrl-H (Mac: Command-H) to hide the marching ants.

4 To soften the stroke layer, apply a light Gaussian blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) and enter a Radius of 0.5 pixels. You can then use a hard-edged Eraser (E) tool to erase parts of the stroke that aren’t needed. If the stroke is still too strong, adjust the layer’s Opacity to make it more subtle.
At this point, your new brush is just temporary; it’ll disappear when you change brush sets. To permanently add it, you’ll need to save the brush.

Go to Edit>Preset Manager. From the Preset Type drop-down menu, select Brushes, then scroll to the bottom of the brush list and click on your newly defined brush. If you’ve created multiple brushes, you can save them all at once; just Ctrl-click (Mac: Command-click) on each brush. A bold border appears around selected brushes.

Once you’ve made your selection, click Save Set, give your brush set a name, and navigate to the folder where you want to save your custom brushes. If you only want to use your brush occasionally, you can save it anywhere on your system and then load it when needed (go to the online Subscriber Extras section for my instructions on loading a brush). If you’d like your custom brush to always appear in the Brushes palette drop-down menu, save it to the location shown below:

For Windows:
C:\Program Files\Adobe\your version of Photoshop Elements\Presets\Brushes

For Mac:
Applications/your version of Adobe Photoshop Elements/Presets/Brushes

After saving, you’ll need to restart Elements for your new brush set to show up in the Brushes palette.

EXTRAS: DRESS UP YOUR STAMP

The basics of creating a brush stamp are simple, but that doesn’t mean your designs have to be. With some imagination, you can create complex designs, including textures, decorative brushes, and more. You can even use a gradient to color your stamp. For step-by-step instructions on how I created this effect—as well as links to download the frame, fonts, and brushes I used—go online to the Subscriber Extras section. PhotoshopElementsUser.com

Diana Day, retired H.R. Manager and self-taught Elements user, hosts a PSE Users Group where she teaches Elements to members of her community. Diana also puts her skills to practical use administering her church’s Web page and public relations projects.
Elements Tips and Tricks

Filters and Image Size
Did you know that the size of an image determines a filter’s effect? For instance, many of the filters that create artistic effects apply fixed-size brush strokes. When applied to small images, these brush strokes can destroy detail in the image. If you want to apply an effect filter on an image that will be reduced in size, make sure you apply it before resizing the image—unless that’s specifically what you’re looking for. (This is also true when applying many of the plug-ins discussed on page 11.)—Matt Kloskowski

Add Layer Opacity for Finer Control
In many of my tutorials I suggest making changes on a duplicate layer and reducing the layer’s opacity to blend the original image with your changes. But a lot of times, if you reduce the opacity from 100%, your eyes are already tuned into seeing the effect at full strength and you may end up with something that looks fake because you didn’t reduce the opacity enough.

As an alternative, try bringing the opacity of the duplicate layer down to 0% immediately after you apply the effect. Then slowly raise it. You’ll find that adding the effect slowly back in, instead of removing it, will help you figure out whether the change is tasteful or over the top.—MK

Use Lighten Blend Mode with Healing Brush
Whenever you’re working on lightening a darker area on someone’s face with the Healing Brush, go to the Options Bar at the top of the screen and set the tool’s Blend Mode to Lighten. This really helps make the area you’re retouching fit in better with the original skin texture.—MK

Here are two detail views of the same image with the Cutout filter applied, using the same settings. The photo on the left has a higher resolution than the one on the right, and preserves more detail.
Paste With Precision

Are you frustrated that things never seem to go where you want when you’re using the Paste command? Try this: After you’ve copied the pixels you want to paste, make a very small selection where you want the center of the paste pixels to appear. (You can use any selection tool, but the Marquee tools work well.) Now when you paste, the copied pixels will be centered over the small selection you made.—MK

Find the Right Font Easily

Here’s a great way to try different fonts on a Type layer when you’re looking for just the right typeface. With the Type layer active in the Layers palette (the text doesn’t need to be selected), click once in the Font field in the Options Bar so the font name is highlighted. Then press the arrow keys to move up or down in your list of fonts.—MK

Mac-only: Full Camera Raw in Adobe Bridge

While the Photoshop Elements Editor is identical on both Macs and PCs, Mac users get Adobe Bridge instead of the Organizer. Bridge is generally more powerful than the Organizer, although it has a more challenging learning curve.

One great advantage that Mac users get with Bridge, however, is when working with Raw files; inside Bridge, if you click on a photo and choose File>Open in Camera Raw (Command-R), you get the familiar Camera Raw interface, with the exception being that you get all of Camera Raw’s functionality, not the stripped-down version that is included with Photoshop Elements. You get a whole new set of tools, including Targeted Adjustments, the Graduated Filter, and the Spot Removal and Adjustment brushes. And, in the tabs on the right side of the screen, you’ll find Convert to Grayscale (found in Photoshop), Split Toning, Lens Correction, and the capability to save and use Camera Raw presets.

When you finish making your changes in Bridge’s Camera Raw, just click Done, and you’ll see your adjustments to the photo in the Bridge window preview. When you double-click on the image in Bridge, it will now open the image in Camera Raw inside Elements; just click OK, and the photo will keep all of the Camera Raw adjustments you made in Bridge. It might seem a bit convoluted, but it works great.

There’s one caveat: when you install Elements on your Mac, only one version of Camera Raw gets installed—the one associated with the Editor—and the Open in Camera Raw menu item is grayed out. To install Camera Raw in Bridge, go to Bridge’s Help menu and choose Updates. The Adobe updater will find Camera Raw, install it in the proper place, and let you use the full version.—Rick LePage

We created a quick selection with the Marquee tool inside this Polaroid frame (left), and now, whatever we paste will show up in the center of this selection (right).
Turn Off an Adjustment Layer Mask

If you want to see what the effects of an adjustment layer would look like without the layer mask, hold down the Shift key and click on the mask’s thumbnail in the Layers palette. A big red “X” will indicate that the mask is turned off. Shift-click on the mask again to turn it back on. If you want to view just the layer mask, hold down Alt (Mac: Option) and click on the mask thumbnail in the Layers palette. To view the layer, hold down the Alt key again and click back on the mask thumbnail.—MK

Master the Navigator Palette

The Navigator palette, accessible via the Window menu, is a one-stop shop for navigating around in your document. It shows you a thumbnail version of your image, with the currently viewed portion outlined in red, and you can change your main document view by dragging the red ‘view box’ around the image. If you hold down the Control key (Mac: Command key), the cursor will change your pointer into a magnifying glass, and you can click-and-drag within the thumbnail preview window to see a different view. Other ways to navigate inside this palette include dragging the slider to zoom in and out, typing in the exact percentage of zoom you want, or clicking on the tiny ‘+’ and ‘-’ signs on either side of the slider to zoom in or out.

I find the Navigator palette most useful as a floating window, not docked in the palette well on the right side of the screen. If it is in the dock, just click on the tab and drag it out into the main interface. You can then resize the Navigator window to suit your workspace, making it a lot easier to get the views you want.—MK

Lighting Effects

The Lighting Effects filter (Filter>Render>Lighting Effects) is one of those features that goes unnoticed by many users, but it has so much potential. It’s a great way to add some light to a texture or an image with a very flat background. You can change the color of the light quite easily, either via the controls in the dialog box, or by clicking on the lighting preview itself and adjusting the direction and size of the light.—MK

[Editor’s note: There are two videos on the Lighting Effects filter in the Subscriber Videos area of the Web site.]

Undo? How About Redo?

This is another one of those keyboard commands that gets lost. Everyone knows that Ctrl-Z (Mac: Command-Z) is the short cut for Undo, but if you want to Redo, remember Ctrl-Y (Mac: Command-Y). These commands are a great pair when you want to walk and forth through a bunch of changes you’ve made to a file.—MK

Zoom to 100% Quickly

While looking at one of your images, you can quickly zoom to 100% view by pressing Ctrl-1 (Mac: Command-1). It helps for me to remember this one by thinking about 1 being short for 100. —MK
Heron on Heron
Byron West
WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO

I captured this heron last December at a lovely park in Indian Rocks, Florida, on the Gulf Coast. The beautiful heron told me how it wanted to be captured and gave me the time to do so. When this type of communication occurs between the subject and the photographer through the camera, it is rare, exciting and absolutely addicting. (Shot with a Canon 50D using a 70-300mm lens.)

Hosta Striptease
Bill Cooke
NEW LONDON, OHIO

The sun was just getting to the hosta on the north side of my house after a morning shower. I had been experimenting with HDR and thought that this would be a perfect subject. I mounted my Canon 40D and 24-105mm lens on a tripod and took three Raw images using Auto Exposure Bracketing in Aperture Priority mode. After combining the images using Dynamic Photo HDR software I opened the image in Elements 7 and added a Levels adjustment layer, some minimal saturation, and flattened and sharpened the image. The crispness and clarity remind me of long-ago slide film.

Frosted Color
Clifton Jones
CAMBRIA HEIGHTS, NEW YORK

This image was taken in my bathroom window with frosted glass and available light for the background and edited in Elements 6 with basic levels and hue/saturation adjustments. I also used the Free Transform tool to adjust the perspective.
Old Times
Armando Gaspar
AMADORA, PORTUGAL

To take a walk in the Alto Alentejo, Portugal, is a call for peace and to meet some of the good things in life. Strolling around the lovely village of Nisa, I came across this icon, full of history, which reflects the winds of change that has blown up since those times to today. To give the photograph a bit more power, and to highlight those ancient times, I converted it to black and white using Matt Kloskowski’s “Elements 6 Black and White Conversion” video from the Subscriber area.

Frost
Judy Kepshire
WOODRIDGE, ILLINOIS

As a photographer you wait for this type of spectacular weather conditions. I woke up and frost was literally covering everything. Sadly I had to go to work, so I ran outside and took a picture of the crab apple tree in my front yard. I processed this image with a Levels adjustment, increased the saturation a little and then used the High Pass filter, changing the layer’s blend mode from Normal to Overlay.

Umbrella On The Rocks
Dale Stillman
VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON

This photo was taken at Stanley Park, Vancouver B.C. Very little post-processing was done other than slight cropping, small levels and saturation adjustments on the foreground, and a little bit of Gaussian blur on the sky and water.

Sweet Abigail
Carol Webb
LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

On this photo, I used lots of blend modes and a chocolate filter, bringing just a little of the color back in. I tend to crop my photos of children like this because of a cropping tutorial done some years ago by Matt Kloskowski. I never looked at cropping the same way after that tutorial and still enjoy fooling with cropping.

EXTRAS: SUBMIT YOUR WORK!

Go to the Magazine Subscriber Gallery section in the Elements Village forums and read the message, “How to Submit Images to the P.S.T. Subscriber Showcase,” which has the info you’ll need to upload your photos. The next deadline is April 1.

www.ElementsVillage.com