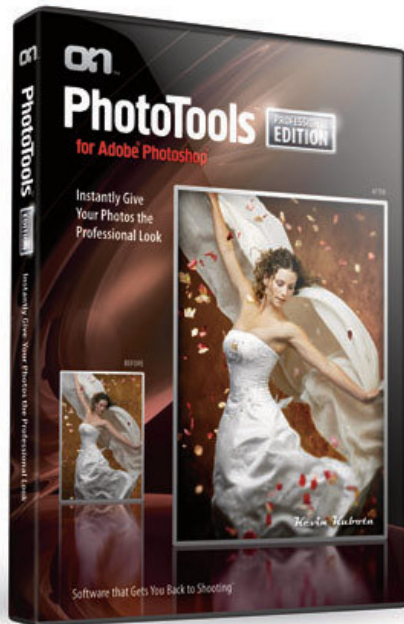


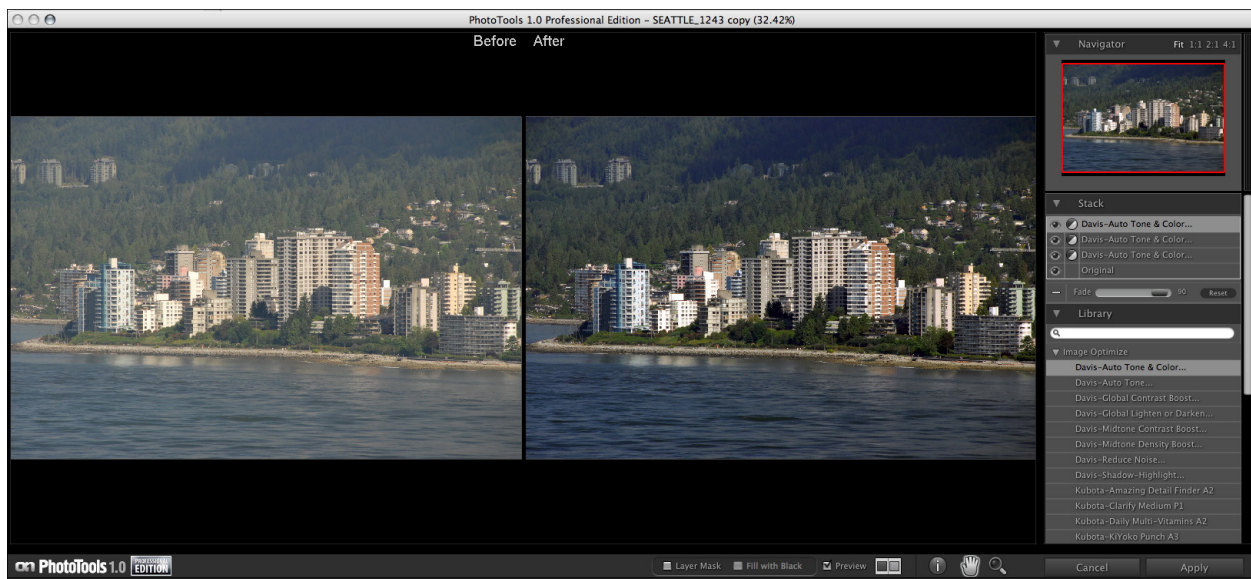
PhotoTools 1.0 Professional Edition from onOne Software
By Darrel Priebe



If you use Photoshop (PS) for processing your digital photographs, but aren't a master of this complex program (and who is?), then PhotoTools by onOne Software may be just what you need. PhotoTools offers you a very easy method to enhance your photographs and give them a more professional or artistic appearance. If you are already proficient with Photoshop, then PhotoTools will give you the gift of time because it will speed up the routine tasks of color correcting and enhancing images and reduce the time required to add the artistic touches that make your images stand out from the crowd.

Imagine this - you can color correct an image, auto adjust the levels and contrast, smooth the skin, brighten the eyes and add a soft glow to a portrait, in just 6 clicks. Wouldn't that save you time? Then you can save the stack of effects you just used, and apply it with only one-click the next time you need it. To add a machine gun burst of efficiency to your workflow, you can apply that same stack of effects to a batch of pictures all at once. Wow! That is a real time saver.

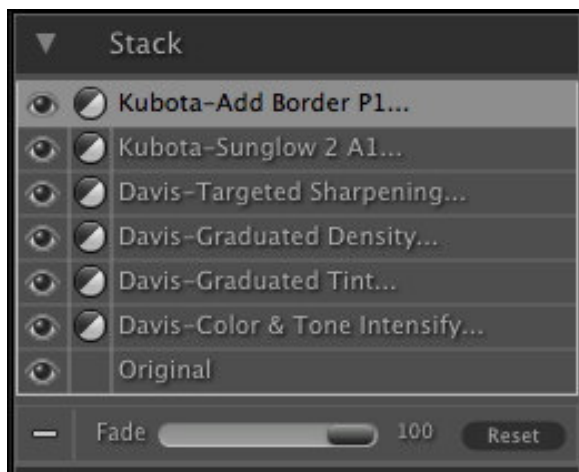
Let's back up and start at the top. After installation, you launch PhotoTools from within Photoshop (CS2 or CS3 is required) through the onOne menu bar at the top of the PS main window. When you do, Photoshop's interface disappears and the PhotoTools interface window opens in a few seconds. You will see two versions of your picture, a Before and After view, which gives you an immediate preview of effects you have selected. This window is resizable, so you can open it up to take advantage of your full-sized monitor. You also have a choice of 5 different views of your image, horizontal, vertical, split-horizontal, split-vertical, and split image.



The PhotoTools interface window showing two horizontal views of the same image, with the After view on the right.

To the right of the twin images, you'll find a Navigator (outlined in red) similar to Photoshop's Navigator, a Stack palette in the middle which lists all the effects you have applied to your image (like the Layers Palette in Photoshop), and the Library at the bottom. The Library contains all the image treatments you can apply to your photograph, and there are literally hundreds to choose from in PhotoTools 1.0 Professional Edition.

To apply an effect, sometimes called an Action in PS vernacular, you simply double click on the effect name in the Library. You can stack multiple effects in the PhotoTools window, and easily apply as many as you like to the same photo. Each treatment has a slider to control the amount of the effect from 0 to 100%. You can delete any individual treatment in the stack, keeping all others you like, or quickly reset the stack to start over. If you like the stack of effects you have created, you can save it in your own Presets folder. Best of all, when you click the Apply button, PhotoTools automatically applies the effects to a new layer in PS, so it's easy to later delete or blend the effects to suit your taste.



A close up view of the Stack window showing the 6 different effects that are previewed, along with the -- Delete effect button, the Fade slider and the Reset button, which clears the stack to start over.

There are 250 effects in the Professional Edition, plus 100 more bonus effects from Photoshop guru Jack Davis and Kevin Kubota. The effects come in 15 different categories, including Image Optimize, Landscape Enhance, Portrait Enhance, Color Treatments, Black & White Treatments, Tinting Treatments, Photo Filters, Camera Tricks, Film & Darkroom, Stylized Effects, One-Click Art, Type-Graphic Effects, Overlay Effects, Edge Treatments and Frame Treatments. There are really too many effects to show you an example of all of the different types, but it's fun and easy to sample them to find the ones you like.

Here are two PhotoTools effects, with the original picture on top.



Original "Sleeping Boy" image by Darrel Priebe

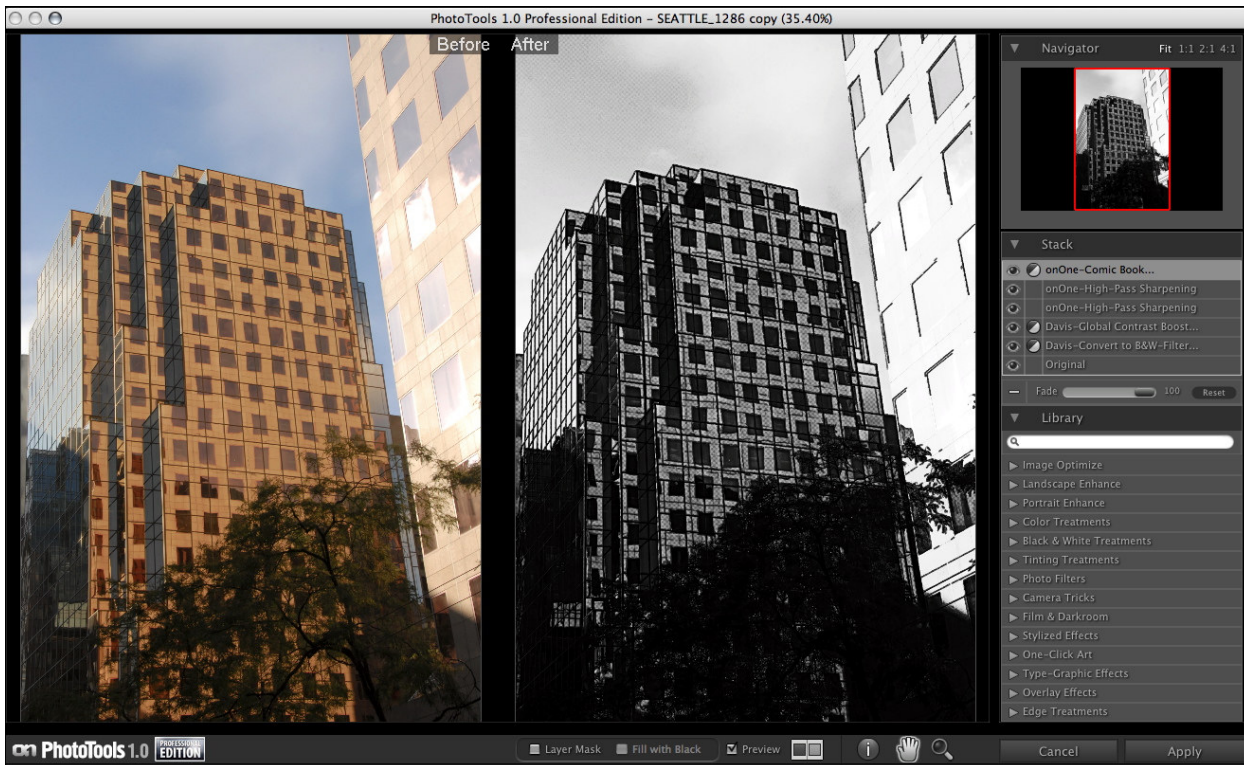


Sleeping Boy with the Davis-Antique Color Effect from the Color Treatments Library



Sleeping Boy with the Davis-Wow Tint Brown + Lite Edges effect from the Tinting Treatments Library. This effect was a one-click treatment, including the soft-edge frame.

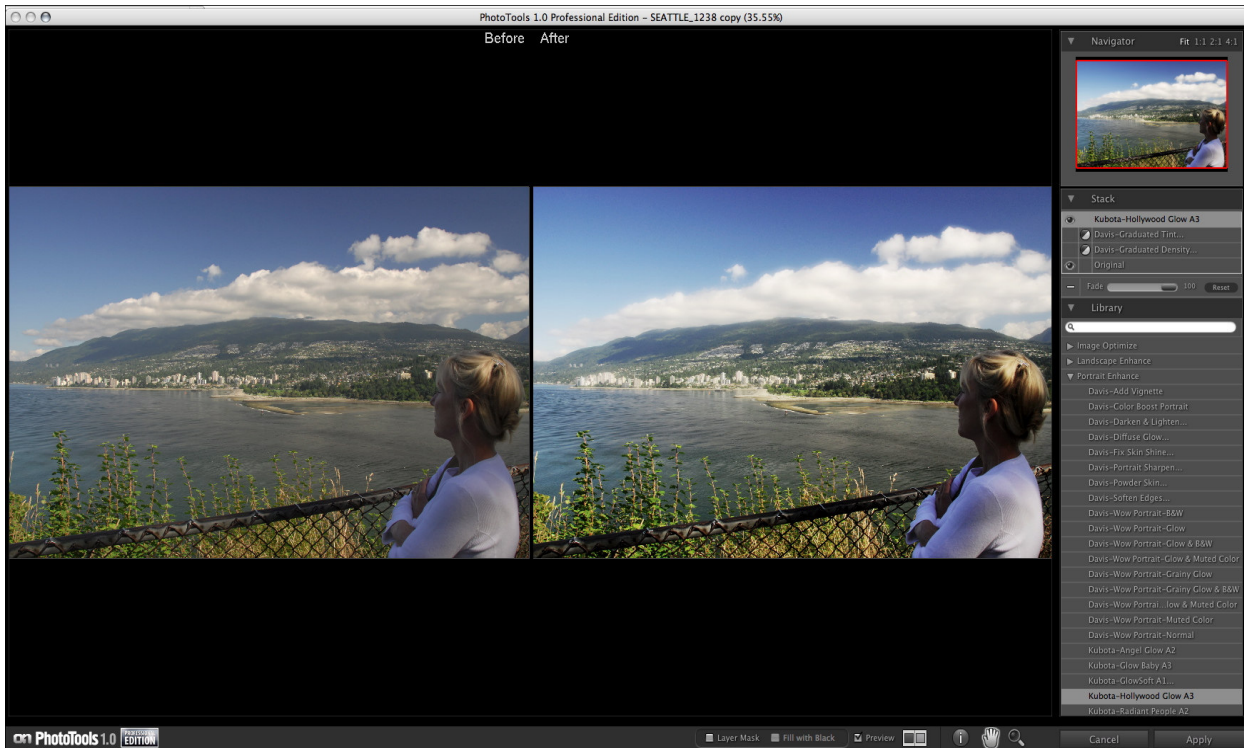
You will also find 14 additional stacked effects in the onOne Preset folder, which group a combination of individual effects into collections like the “Funky Senior” portrait that gives a trendy new look to a high-school senior portrait, or the “Graphic Novel Look” for a gritty, textured, black & white effect which could easily grace the cover your next murder mystery novel.



Seattle Skyline picture by Darrel Priebe, with the Graphic Novel Look effect on the right.

A terrific time-saver is the Batch processing tool, which lets you batch process photos with your favorite effects, and simultaneously convert them to multiple output formats like JPEG or TIFF, and to multiple sizes for print or web, and even add watermarks at the same time. Wow – that’s a real time saver!

Render times are fairly fast, between 1 and 10 seconds depending on the number and complexity of the treatments you have chosen. Unfortunately, for curious users like me, all the little steps contained in each PhotoTools process are hidden from view, and aren’t listed in the PS History Palette, so you can’t analyze the PhotoTools methods and learn which exact steps and techniques were used. I guess everyone wants to keep their Photoshop techniques a secret!



You can use a Portrait effect for a Landscape picture, as shown here in the image, Vancouver View, by Darrel Priebe, with the Kubota-Hollywood Glow3 effect from the Portraits Library.

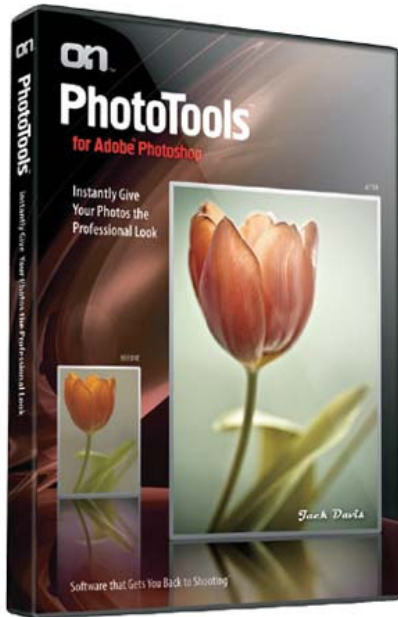
Shortcomings are few and minor. PhotoTools doesn’t label the layer in Photoshop with the name of the enhancement, but it really should. You will see the name of each treatment when you are in the PhotoTools stack window, but those names don’t transfer over to Photoshop when you apply the individual treatment. You have to rename the layer, now generically labeled “PhotoTools #1” in PS, to the name of a specific effect, so you can remember which enhancement you used. Other photo enhancement programs do label the layer for you with the name of the enhancement.

While I’m on the subject of improvements, the Library column is not resizable, so you see only a truncated name for the longer effects names in the library. OnOne - make that column adjustable so we can see the whole name of the longer titled effects.

On my Mac, this program was extremely stable, and never locked-up, but I have heard that there are a few lock-ups on some PC’s running this program. What else is new?

Summary: If you want a super fast and easy-to-use photo enhancement plug-in program for Photoshop, that will give your pictures greater snap and dazzle and save you time to boot, you can't do better than PhotoTools by onOne Software. From color corrections, to portrait enhancement, to special effects, PhotoTools does it all easily and with quality that is well worth the price.

Cost: The Professional Edition with 250+ effects sells for \$259.95 and the Standard Edition contains 150 effects for \$159.95. I saw the Pro Edition online for \$244 at Buy.com and the Standard Edition for \$126 at the same site. For teachers and students, the Pro Edition is only \$130 at Academic Superstore.com, a real bargain!



PhotoTools Standard Edition with 150 effects, but without the Pro Edition's 100 bonus effects from Photoshop gurus Jack Davis and Kevin Kubota that are definitely worth purchasing.

Website: onOne Software's web site for PhotoTools contains tutorials and demo downloads for both Windows and Mac versions. I suggest you give this program a free trial if you are interested. You may be very happy with the quality of the effects, and with the time you save making your pictures snap, dazzle and pop! OnOne's PhotoTools website is

http://www.ononesoftware.com/detail.php?prodLine_id=29

System Requirements:

Photoshop:

- CS2 (9.0.2) or CS3
- 512MB RAM (1GB recommended);
- OpenGL capable video card with 128MB VRAM (256 recommended) at 1024x768 or higher
- 50 MB disk space
- Adobe Flash Player 9
- Internet Connection for auto-updates

Mac OS X:

- Mac OS X 10.4.8 or higher
- Universal Binary - Supports PowerPC & Intel Processors

Windows:

- Windows XP SP2, Vista or higher
- Microsoft .NET 2.0 Framework or higher is *required* for PhotoTools to work