

Power Retouche - A Review

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I recently received the full set of Power Retouche plugins as a prize for my POTM for December. After using them for a short time, I can say that if I had not won this marvelous product, I would have purchased it. This is a marvelous product and deserves to be considered when one is searching for additional editing tools.

As a point of reference, I will give you a brief description of my "style" and approach to photo editing. I originally started as a film photographer and changed to digital cameras when the DSLRs became affordable in 2003. I try to achieve most of my photographic goals when I shoot a photo. However, we all know that shots right out of the camera still need a little editing to make them as we saw them when we originally took the shot. I have worked quite a bit with Photoshop, starting with v7 and continuing to upgrade till I got to CS2. I can do quite a bit with CS2. However I do not like to spend hours and hours on photo editing unless I am working on a truly DA piece.

Here are some of the reasons why I like Power Retouche so much:

Ease of use from downloading to editing the finished product.

- When I received the link to download Power Retouche, I immediately set aside plenty of time to do the download and install. However, all of that time was not necessary. The programs downloaded quickly and easily with no problem. The dialogue box told me exactly where the path should point so that all of the plugins would be readily available when I opened up Photoshop for the first time after the install. I noted the path, and checked it against the default path that was presented to me during the install process. I had to do absolutely nothing but click on the "continue" button. The program automatically found the correct Photoshop plugin folder.
- When I opened up Photoshop, the Power Retouche plugins root directory was right there under "Filters" in Photoshop and the whole list came up as soon as I clicked on it.
- The desktop interface is very slick, intuitive and well laid out with the controls on the right and the image window on the left. The size of the window and the controls make it very easy for me to make the image the size that I want to use for applying the various effects.
- The desktop interface is very similar for each plugin so that the user does not have to search through a bunch of stuff to find the control he wants.
- When the editing is complete, a click of the "apply" button saves the changes to the image and you are back home in Photoshop.

Control of the finished product

- The level of control that the user has over the final image is absolutely phenomenal using Power Retouche. There are so many ways to adjust so many variables with each plugin to get exactly the look that you want for your image and you can see the result in the preview window as you work. If you have adjusted something and it doesn't look right, there is a reset button to return the image to its previous state.
- More than one plugin can be used on an image without the need for masking or layer work, although Power Retouche does work well with layers and masks well too. Use of more than one plugin on an image does not degrade an image either.

Versatility and Scalability

- Power Retouche works equally effectively on 8 and 16 bit Tiffs, large JPEGs and even small web-sized JPEGs like we create for posting at the Café.
- One of the big problems that I always had with Photoshop on my web-sized JPEGs has been that trying to do minor tweaks on a small image as the result of some suggestion that I had received was sometimes like trying to swat a fly with a sledge hammer and it always seemed easier to start all over again with the full sized file to do the minor adjustment. This is not the case with Power Retouche. I have used it very successfully to do minor tweaks to my small images which is a great time saver.

Some of the Plugins that I absolutely LOVE:

All of the Power Retouche Plugins are absolutely wonderful, but I do have my favorites and ones that I use the most.

- Golden Section: I use this plugin on almost every image that I do now. The plugin does not change the image itself, but allows you to check and adjust your images according to different compositional conventions like Rule of Thirds, Golden Sections, Harmonic Triangles, and Golden Spiral. You can also create transparent overlays for use in Photoshop with this plugin if you don't want to open up Power Retouche each time. Each convention is automatically adjusted to the size and orientation of your image.
- Dynamic Range Compressor: This plugin works kind of like the Shadow and Highlight tool in Photoshop. However, I like it better because the different values of light, dark and midtones are easier to adjust effectively. The user can also define % shadows, shadow depth and black point. Power Retouche also does not affect the color tone or saturation as the Shadow and Highlight tool does in Photoshop sometimes.
- Anti-Aliasing and Histogram Repair plugins. These plugins help repair photos from damage caused by many digital processes including editing. It gets rid of the jaggies and fills in the gaps in the histogram very well to make the photo look smoother and better.
- Black and White Studio and Toned Photos: If you love Black and White photographs, you will absolutely love this plugin. In Black and White Studio, you can define the color compensating filter that best fits your image, select a particular traditional black and white film look if you would like and adjust your tonal range and things like black saturation in any way that you desire until you get just the look that you want. I have spent hours playing with this plugin. The black and white conversion engine is so strong that I was finally able to successfully convert a photo that I had not been able to convert successfully to black and white without introducing a lot of noise and artifacts. This made me extremely happy because I had shot the image with the intention of converting it to black and white. The Toned Photos plugin has some marvelous toning options as well and is very versatile.
- This list of favorites is certainly not all-inclusive and every one of the other Power Retouche plugins is just as wonderful as the ones presented above. There is a great tool for every process and problem in the Photo Retouch Full Set.

As I said at the beginning, if I had not won Power Retouche, I would have bought it based on my experience with it. I checked the price of the Full Set and it is a bargain IMHO. Actually, Power Retouche gives you the opportunity to download a full functioning demo of the filters if you are in the market for new tools. The only difference between the demo and the "real deal" is that the demo applies a watermark to the image you create with a demo, but it is a great way to try it before you buy it. My only warning is to have your credit card ready because I think you will love the results that you get and want to have the full package without the watermark.

Happy shooting and editing.

Linda Yee



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