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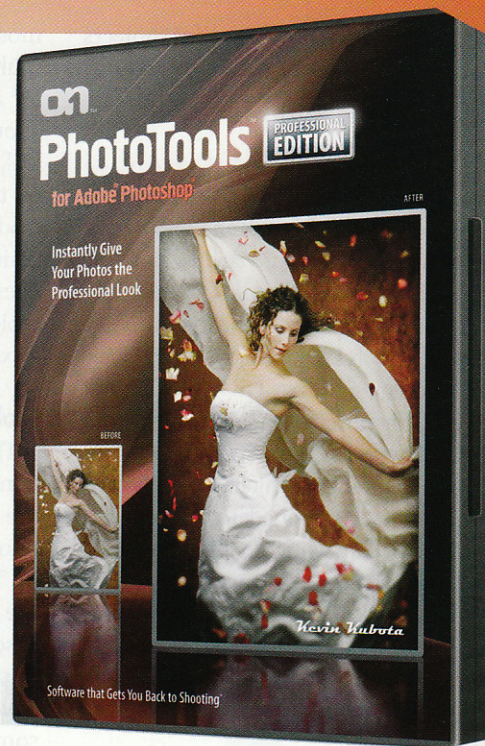
## PhotoTools 1 Professional Edition Plug-in

By Ryan Klos

For photographers shooting in the digital age of iPhones and Web 2.0, knowing Photoshop is like knowing what chemicals to mix in the darkroom. And while many of today's professional photographers are Photoshop power users who create custom actions and processing techniques as part of their digital workflow, a great many are not. But that doesn't mean professional custom-processed images are out of reach. With onOne Software's recent release of PhotoTools 1 Professional Edition, anyone using Photoshop CS2 or CS3 can employ more than 250 effects designed by Photoshop gurus Jack Davis and Kevin Kubota—the same effects they use on their own images. And the results are most definitely professional.

PhotoTools 1 Professional Edition is a collection of photo effects and enhancements bundled into one convenient plug-in. The effects range from common photographic adjustments and image optimizations to color treatments and camera tricks. It gives you access to some of the most useful post-processing enhancements such

as skin smoothing, boosting contrast, bringing out shadow detail, applying graduated filters, applying film grain and dozens of other interesting effects.



The interface is very simple to use with an intuitive layout.

In standard onOne fashion, the interface is extremely intuitive. When the plug-in is launched a new workspace appears with your image preview occupying most of the screen in two windows—before on the left, after on the right, in compare mode.

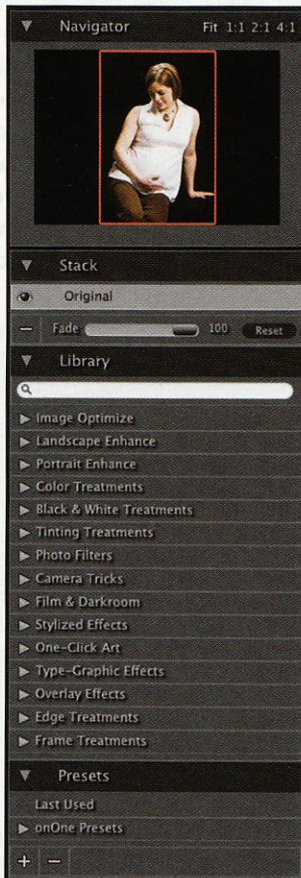
You can change this preview so your image shows before and after one above the other, or single split your image vertically or horizontally with before on one half, after on the other. A final option lets you view the live working version by itself. I found before and after side-by-side worked best for monitoring the changes as I applied each effect.

On the right-hand side the modules column is broken into four sections: Navigator, Stacks, Library and Presets. Starting from the top, the navigator is very similar to the one used in Lightroom and



**Left:** Original; **Right:** Image after using Portrait Optimization and Skin Smoothing.

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All the effects and tools are assembled in one easy-to-navigate column.

Photoshop—fairly self-explanatory. Next is the Stacks section where you can see each effect stacked in the order it is applied. If you're familiar with Photoshop, think of this as your layers pallet. Next, the Library is where all the effects live and where you choose which ones you want to apply. Finally, the Presets section is where you can



All 250 effects are grouped into one of 15 categories in the Library.

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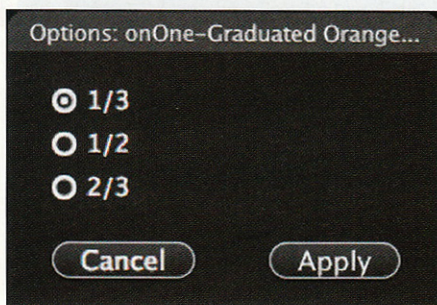
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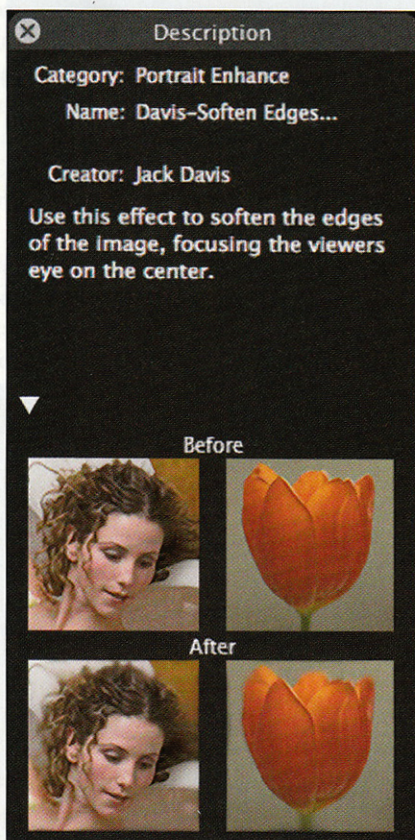
Some effects offer more options for application than merely adjusting their strength.

select a saved preset of several effects to apply at once to your image.

Adding an effect to your image is as simple as double-clicking—make your choice and it shows up under the Stacks section. This is where you can change the order of your effects, hide them or change their strength by using the Fade slider (think Opacity slider in Photoshop). Some of the effects, like adding a graduated filter, allow you to control how far or heavily the effect is applied by providing options in a pop-up window.

Other effects offer different options, but for the most part using the Fade slider to adjust the strength of the effect is the only control you'll have.

I suggest exploring different effects and



The inspector shows a thumbnail before/after of the selected effect, as well as a brief written description.

combinations, but when you're looking for something specific, it's nice to get there fast. The built-in search function will save you time and guesswork as it allows you to search by author or keyword. For instance, when I wanted a smoothing effect, I typed in "smooth" and received eight results for effects that had smooth in their title or description. Still, some of the effect titles are not quite so descriptive with names such as GlowSoft A1 or Anime A3. In cases where I wanted more information I relied heavily on the Inspector—a floating pop-up that provides a before-and-after thumbnail preview of each effect along with a short written description.

After I achieved the look I wanted, I applied the effects to my image. By default PhotoTools returned me to Photoshop and added the image with applied effects to a new layer leaving my original image and layers untouched. The huge advantage of the new layer is that if you're not happy with it you can easily delete it and start over. Or play with layer blending modes and raise or lower the opacity of that new layer for an even more customized image.

The more I used this plug-in I quickly saw the limitless possibilities and power of adding effects as separate layers with different blending modes like Multiply, Overlay and Soft Light. And don't forget about selectively applying effects by using layer masks. PhotoTools allows you to add a mask at the same time you apply effects so you can paint away any areas of the effect you don't want showing through, or reverse it and check the "Fill with Black" box so you can paint in any areas you want to reveal.

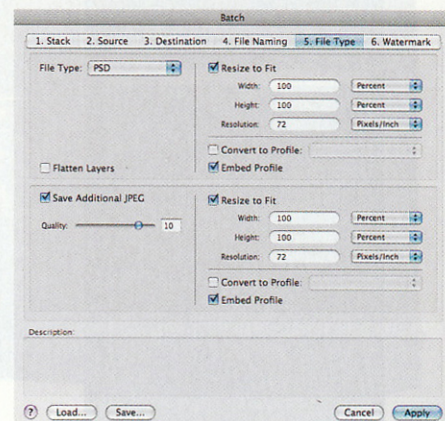


You can add a layer mask to your image when applying the effects from within PhotoTools.

While creating the mask in Photoshop is simple enough to do myself, the Layer Mask checkbox saved a step when I knew I was going to paint in or away some of the effect. Anything that saves a step and speeds up my processing time is a welcome enhancement.

The PhotoTools plug-in is all about creating a custom look for your photos, which means repeatability is important. Once you've found a set of effects and opacities that suit your desired look, saving the stack of effects as a preset will ensure your images maintain a consistent appearance and save you loads of time in the future. Next

time you have a photo that you want to apply your signature look to, simply select the custom preset you created under the onOne menu from within Photoshop. PhotoTools quickly applies it, and you can keep working. You can create several presets for various types of photos or specific projects. For example, it might be useful to have one preset for senior portraits, one for weddings and another for landscapes.



Batch processing allows you to choose format, size and resolution of exported images.

Processing images one at a time is necessary in the beginning to get a feel for the plug-in, but in a real life studio, it just isn't practical. In an effort to speed things up, PhotoTools allows batch processing coupled with your presets. Just as you might batch process several images within Photoshop, PhotoTools allows you to apply presets to multiple images simultaneously with its own batch processing engine. But it does much more than apply effects. Within the batch processor you have the option to save a copy of your images to a new location in

one of three file formats: PSD, TIFF, JPEG (plus an additional JPEG for other purposes such as burning a client CD). You even have the option to change sizes, convert color profile and even add a watermark.

One of the biggest advantages of this plug-in is how it handles applying the effects. By adding them to a new layer you have the flexibility to manipulate that layer or start over without touching your original image. If you don't like what you see, run the plug-in again, remove an effect and add another or dial one down to see how it changes the image. The possibilities truly are limitless, but subtlety is key when



Original image.



Image after using Global Contrast Adjustment and Shadow/Highlight Correction.

enhancing photos.

The interface was simple to navigate and well designed, and the quality of most of the effects were very professional. There were several effects I don't ever see myself using like Acid Trip and One-Click Art or effects such as Crayon and Colored Pencil, to name a few. Some are just a bit over the top or have very limited use. In my testing, the effects that I used most were Skin Smoothing Techniques, Portrait Optimization, Global Contrast Adjustment and Shadow/Highlight Correction.

Getting familiar with the program was a breeze, but if learning by watching is more your style, tutorial videos are included and will have you enhancing your images in a few short clicks. I recommend watching the tutorials as they include helpful tips for a more productive workflow experience.

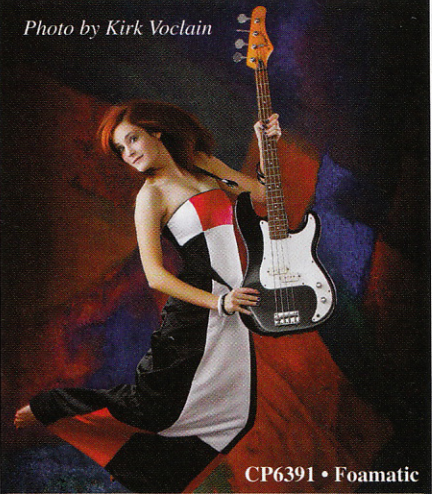
Compared with the standard version, the

PhotoTools 1 Professional Edition includes 100 additional effects by Jack Davis and Kevin Kubota, and judging by the quality of their effects, I think this would be the only way to go if you're a professional wedding or portrait photographer. But that doesn't mean PhotoTools isn't good for landscape, wildlife or sport shooters; the plug-in has plenty of effects to enhance any type of shooting.

PhotoTools 1 Professional Edition retails for \$259.95 and works on Mac OS X 10.4.8 or higher and Windows XP SP2, Vista or higher. For more information, visit: [www.ononesoftware.com](http://www.ononesoftware.com).

*Ryan Klos is a freelance writer and photographer in Woodstock, Illinois. He writes articles, product reviews and profiles for various publications. He has used Photoshop for the past 11 years for design and digital photo processing. In his photography he specializes in senior portraits.*

Photo by Kirk Voclair



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