

More Photoshop plug-ins

Filters and actions lend life-like effects to your images

By Jay J. Nelson

IN BRIEF COMPLETE SUMMARY OF PRODUCT BELOW

☛☛☛ **Chameleon 2.1** Price as rated: **\$69 (home); \$78 (business)**

Photoshop filters, which are available from the program's Filter menu, and Photoshop Actions, which are a series of automated software maneuvers available from the Actions palette, can be powerful tools for making complex changes to an image. Akvis Chameleon 2.1 simplifies the process of placing objects from various images onto a single background.

Chameleon 2.1

When you paste a new image of an object or person into a different image, it can be very difficult to blend its edges and even more difficult to match its color and lighting to the new background. This is particularly troublesome when assembling an artistic collage, in which each individual piece was created under different lighting conditions and yet must blend harmoniously. Equally challenging is the task of adding a new object to a landscape photo—for example a tree, a person, or a boat — especially if either photo was lit dramatically.

Akvis Chameleon 2.1 simplifies this task by blending an object's edges realistically into its new background, and adjusting the object's color and lighting to match the new background.

PICTURES

click to see larger image



Machine Wash Image Filter settings convert this flat illustration (top) into a peeling sign (middle) and a stucco wall (bottom).

All this blending and matching doesn't matter, of course, if you don't know how to extract an object from its original background. This process normally requires painstaking detail work, but Chameleon eases the task because it doesn't require you to make a precise selection. The easiest way to select an object to use with Chameleon is to use Photoshop's Quick Mask mode and simply paint over the object, making sure to include a bit of the background. Copy and paste your new object into another picture, then choose Filter:AKVIS:Chameleon. There is no dialog, so you can't specify settings or options. The plug-in just does its thing.

Chameleon can also allow some of the background image to show through the new object. This Snapshot feature, which is actually one of three menu items— Chameleon, Chameleon (Take Snapshot), and Chameleon (Use Snapshot)—becomes essential when your new object includes areas requiring partial transparency, such as an item made of glass, or a boat's sail. The Snapshot also doubles as a creative feature in Chameleon, making it easy to burn or ghost one image into another. In our testing, Chameleon worked well on colorful objects, but not as well on neutral objects—my gray cat turned green on a patch of green grass, for example.

Macworld's Buying Advice

Akvis Chameleon 2.1 saves time when compositing photos, and if used carefully, it can also be a tool for professional production. Before buying it, however, I recommend that you use the free 10-day trial version on your own images to make sure you achieve the level of quality you need.

SUMMARY

Chameleon 2.1

Pros: Simplifies object extraction; blends edges realistically; adjusts lighting to background; allows for transparent objects.

Cons: Neutral objects take on background color; results are not always realistic; can't specify settings or options.

Price as rated: \$69 (home); \$78 (business)

Company: Akvis, www.akvis.com

<http://www.macworld.com/2005/04/reviews/pshopplugins/index.php>