Akvis *Enhancer v.11*
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Have you taken a photograph of a landscape where parts of the scenery are underexposed? With a standard approach to exposure correction we can run the risk of spoiling the areas of the image that are good. Akvis *Enhancer* offers an individual approach to every part of the photo.

Enhancer is image enhancement software that improves detail within an image. In an unevenly exposed photograph, the program detects detail in underexposed, overexposed and mid-tone areas. It brings blurred images into focus. The program supports HDRI technology.

Enhancer works in four modes: Enhancer, Focus, Smart Correction and HDR mode. The first three modes allow you to improve a single image. To use the HDR mode you need a series of images, but the result can be impressive.

In Enhancer mode the program brings out details on one single image by intensifying color transition. *Enhancer* strengthens the difference between adjacent pixels having different color gradations and therefore enhances details in the underexposed, overexposed and midtone areas.

In Focus mode the program improves sharpness of blurred images where parts of the image are less sharp. You can refocus the whole image or bring only certain elements of the image into focus.

Using Enhancer *in Smart Correction mode*

In Smart Correction mode, the program makes color correction of a photo. The mode is used for tone correction of images, changes in the light and dark areas which improves the overall appearance of the image. Changes can be made to the entire image or to a part of the image by selecting the color(s) to be corrected.

In HDR mode (available only in Standalone version) the program blends a series of images to get one HDR picture. This technology expands the dynamic range of an image and shows details in both shadows and highlights.

The Batch mode support, available in the plug-in version, allows you to automatically process a series of images. Just create an Action in Photoshop and apply the plug-in with the same settings to a folder full of images. It saves you time!

The plug-in version is compatible with Adobe *Photoshop, Photoshop Elements,* Corel *Paint Shop Pro*, etc. More compatibility details can be found on-line.

The program is available in two versions, as an independent program (Standalone) and as a plug-in to a photo editor.

I chose to install both the Standalone and the plug-in versions that look and work the same. *Enhancer* showed up in Adobe *Elements 8* in the filter section. Installation proceeded without difficulty.

An image was opened. Cropping and basic enhancement were completed utilizing Elements. For refinement I chose *Enhancer* from the drop down filter section. The instructions were clearly written. A learning curve is present. I was able to proceed without difficulty. As corrections were made to the image, one mouse click alternates the image from "before" to "after" and back again. The slider(s) adjustments are well defined with simple instructions. Both of the above features are very desirable for visual awareness of the corrections. All or selected areas can be changed.

As stated previously, Enhancer mode and Smart Correction mode apply changes differently. The Enhancer mode is good for areas that need more detail. The Smart Mode changes tonal quality, such as when enhancing a

Auto-Enhance in action. original above, completed version below.

flower. An experienced *Elements* user could probably obtain equivalent results, when compared to the results from using the *Enhancer* plug-in. The advantage for me is that *Enhancer* has an easier learning curve and I can visualize the multiple changes in real time.

The HDR mode is utilized in the Standalone version only to combine/blend two or more images. The procedure is much the same from then on. I tried to merge three images but only two would merge exactly. The third image was slightly off and the final merge was double focused.

The correction is to use a tripod for all photos that you will wish to merge. Each image can then be taken to record and emphasize a different aspect of the target scene by bracketing. I could not find a method to manually adjust the position of the images and then merge. That is a disadvantage because we may not always be able to use a tripod.

I then brought the same three images into *Elements 8*. The third image was off enough that Automatic merge did not work well. So I merged manually and it came in perfectly. Image adjustment was then completed.

Blending Exposures is new in *Elements 8*. One can even adjust the foreground image opacity which is a very nice touch. One needs to remember to choose the best image with the largest area of correct exposure, especially in the midtones, as the

background image. This is because *Elements* adds the next image on top, then starts from the middle and works out when blending the images.

Working with a new set of images in *Enhancer*, the HDR mode worked well. The final image was excellent.

Enhancer is a useful program. I encourage you to try it. I suggest opening a close-up of your favorite flower photo and playing with the sliders and note the dramatic and/or subtle variations.

For more information, tutorials and beautiful HDR photos, go to the very informative web site t. You can download and try the software for 10 days free of charge! When the evaluation period is over you must enter a registration key to continue.

About: Akvis *Enhancer v.11*

Vendor: Akvis
akvis.com/en/enhancer/index.phpm

Price: $69 - plug-in
$81 - stand-alone
Other versions and upgrades are available
available on CD +$19.95

Requirements: akvis.com/en/enhancer/system-requirements.php

Dancing Light, courtesy Tucson nature photographer Paul Royston