AKVIS Pastel €39/$59

Transform your photographs into artistic masterpieces with the help of AKVIS's handy software

Compatibility

- OS X 10.4
- 1GB RAM
- 100MB HDD
- 32/64 bit processor

Learn more…
akvis.com/en/pastel

Available from…
www.akvis.com

There are many reasons why you may want to edit a photograph to make it look like a painting: it looks more artistic, you have control over how it looks, and it's a lot cheaper than getting a painting commissioned. AKVIS's Pastel is designed with that one sole aim and delivers on those three fronts.

If you're not the most artistic person and feel like a satisfactory result may be hard to achieve, then there's no need to worry – Pastel includes a one-click solution for any users looking for a quick conversion. Just open the photo you wish to convert, select one of the 14 presets available (you can also save your own) and press the Play button. For those looking for a touch more control over their projects, then Pastel still has you covered.

After you've imported your photo (you can only work on one photo at a time) you have access to several different parameters, including stroke thickness, stroke intensity, smoothing and paper colour – the latter of which has a significant effect on how the finished product looks. As you're changing these sliders, you're only able to see potential changes in a preview window – if you want to see what the photo looks like after you've tweaked a slider, you're going to have to convert the whole thing again. It's an understandable limitation that enables Pastel to be effective on older hardware, but we had no problem with the processing speed even when using the maximum preview size of 700 pixels, and as such did not have long to wait to see the results.

And for the most part, Pastel's results were good. The impact of the effect will of course vary from photo to photo – in our experience landscapes performed better than portraits – but the conversion nearly always looked authentic. If you want to share your files, you can export your painting as JPEG, PNG, BMP or TIF and Pastel enables you to share your conversion straight to Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and others. Despite only being able to work on one image at a time, Pastel also supports batch processing – you just pick a source folder, a destination folder and a preset and the software does the rest.

Overall, Pastel is a very good app that creates solid pastel renditions of your photographs, and it does so at a reasonable price point.

Buy now?

Pros Produces believable pastel art with little effort needed, low price

Cons Limited post-processing options and preview window

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