

AKVIS Enhancer

Review by Sherry London

Image enhancement software brings out the juicy details



AKVIS Enhancer is a filter designed to replace Photoshop's Shadow/Highlight adjustment. It plugs into any program that accepts Adobe standard plug-ins. You can adjust to favor the highlights, the shadows, or an equal distribution of values. You can also alter the intensity of the effect and the level of detail.

While Shadow/Highlight was one of my favorite new features in the Photoshop CS release, it didn't work as well as AKVIS Enhancer on many of the images I tried. When used on ocean tones, Shadow/Highlight at default settings tended to flatten the values and gray them out; Enhancer didn't.

If anything, Enhancer has to be watched very carefully so that it doesn't oversaturate images. However, the detail that it finds can be astounding. In the Tall Ships image that I tested it on, Enhancer found cloud texture in the sky. Shadow/Highlight produced a totally flat, even-colored sky. Enhancer, at certain settings, also tried to let you see through the sails to the dark details of the expressway across the river.

When you lighten any underexposed image, regardless of method, the image tends to get very noisy. The only problem I had with Enhancer was the noise created on saturated areas that were dark to begin with. Reds in an image also were oversaturated; however, the settings enable you to compensate most of the time. The histograms of any image that I viewed stayed healthy and didn't posterize. The best results occurred when I filtered in a new layer and then masked out the less successful parts of the results.

PRICE: \$69 (home) \$78 (business)

FOR: Mac and Windows

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RATING: 4.0

<http://www.layersmagazine.com/reviews/2005/03/akvis-enhancer/>