Perfect Photo Suite 6

Reviewed by Bryan Anslow, Member, Thousand Oaks PC Club, CA
www.topcc.org
spater (at) roadrunner.com

Perfect Photo Suite 6, produced by OnOne Software (www.onOneSoftware.com), is a collection of seven image enhancement utilities. Perfect Photo Suite 6 can be used as a stand-alone set of utilities, or the utilities can be invoked from within Adobe CS4 or CS5, Photoshop Elements 9 or 10, Lightroom 2 or 3 and Aperture 2.1 or 3.

Here is a quick overview of the seven utilities included;

Perfect Portrait 1 - Smart Retouching for Portraits, automates many of the retouching tasks.
Perfect Layers 2 - Layers for Photographers, fast and easy creation of layers outside of Photoshop, to blend and combine multiple images.
Perfect Effects 3 - Create Images with Impact, using a library of over 300 photographic and creative effects.
Perfect Mask 5 - Replace Backgrounds with Ease, automates many common masking tasks with incredible accuracy.
Perfect Resize 7 - Enlarge Images to Any Size using Genuine Fractals – the industry standard for image resizing.
FocalPoint 2 - Instant Bokeh for your Images, selective focus, blur, depth of field, vignette, tilt shift, etc.
PhotoFrame - 4.6 - ProLayouts, Edges & Adornments, adds perfect finishing touches to your images, also textures, backgrounds, and even complete layouts.

Requirements for installation are Windows XP, Vista or 7, or MAC OS/x 10.6 or 10.7. RAM – 4GB, 8GB recommended. Display resolution should be OPEN GL 2.0 compatible with at least 256MB dedicated RAM, resolution at least 1280x800.

My copy came as a 2.2GB download from the manufacturer's website, together with a license key. There were no surprises in the installation. It just asks for an install directory and installs itself.

I have Photoshop Elements 9 already installed. The Photo Suite installation process integrated Perfect Photo Suite 6 utilities into it automatically.

HTML Help files are available from the website. There are also PDF Files available, but these are just PDF prints of the HTML Help files and are not well formatted.

There are many "How To" videos on the Website in case you may be unsure of how to accomplish some task.

The Photo Suite utilities automatically create layers for the changes made to the image. The changes are fully compatible with CS4/5, Photoshop Elements, Lightroom and Aperture.

If the utilities are used in stand-alone mode, the resulting file is saved as a PSD or PSB file, which is also compatible with CS4/5, Elements 9/10, Lightroom and Aperture. The image can be exported as a jpg or tiff file.

There are just so many possibilities using this software that it would take several pages to review them all, so here is a small selection of their capabilities.

Perfect Portrait 1 – When a portrait is loaded, color casts can be removed giving more natural skin tones. The skin-tune parameters can be fine-tuned manually to get just the right skin tones. When loading a portrait image into Perfect Portrait, it will automatically find skin, hair, eyes, and mouth as well as lips and teeth, allowing each to be changed independently. The masks that define these features can be refined as necessary for full flexibility. Multiple faces within an image can be enhanced independently and each is on its own layer.

Most of the changes are done using simple sliders. Blemishes can be easily removed, teeth and eyes brightened, and fine lines in the skin removed. The retouch brush can be used to remove blemishes, acne, scratches and any other marks you just want to hide. It is also good for hiding wrinkles and dark areas under the eyes, while maintaining a natural look. A set of thumbnail views appears along the bottom of the screen to show how each possible preset will look if applied. A particular set of adjustments can be saved as a preset and applied to similar portraits in the future.

Perfect Layers – When using Photo Suite in stand-alone mode, perfect layers acts as the hub for all of the utilities. Use the masking brush to paint-in or paint-out to achieve perfect masks. Use the masking "bug" tool to achieve perfect blending of multiple layers. Every time you make changes and save (click Apply), your changes appear on a separate layer. Using "view", a set of thumbnails gives a preview of how the multiple layers will interact together. Perfect Layers also contains tools for masking, healing and blending of layers.

Perfect Effects – for your creativity - comes with a library of effects. Full or partial effects can be stored as presets to be used to make similar changes on other images. These presets are stored as layers which can be changed and saved. Multiple effects can be stacked and will be applied to the image in the order given, which can be re-ordered as required. The way the effects are blended can also be controlled.

The preview engine shows examples of the effects as thumbnails along the bottom of the screen. Any changes to the effects will re-render the thumbnails.

Perfect Mask has so many tools for masking/punching through to the layer below, that the lasso tool normally used in image masking may not be required. Perfect mask has a

library of backgrounds which can be used, or you can add a layer with your own background. There are also tools to remove the halo from around an object to blend the edges between the image and the background.

Perfect Resize will use Document Size presets to crop and resize an image in one step from the camera size ratio to the paper size ratio. The tile option can be used to break up a very large print into several "tiles," which can be printed on a smaller printer and then be assembled to form the large printed image. The Gallery Wrap option can increase the image size, with several options, to allow for the wrap-around required by Gallery Wrapped images. Using an industry-standard method, instead of Bi-Cubic, to resize the images, the image can be resized up to 1000% with no loss of clarity.

There is a built-in sharpening tool, a texture tool, and you can even add film grain to the image.

Focal Point is mostly used to apply selective focus, bokeh, and vignettes. The unique focus "bug" tool is used to control the effects. No complicated selections are required, nor having to learn to use settings and dials. Using the Focus Brush, areas of an image can be "painted" in and out of focus. You can control blur/focus to mimic that of popular lenses chosen from a library in Focal Point. A popular tilt/shift effect can also be created.

Perfect Frame has a large library of Frames and Borders which can be applied to your images. You can also create your own frames and save them for use on other images. Similarly, layouts which you create can be saved as presets. Perfect Frame also allows textures and shadows to be applied to the image. The Instant frame option allows you to quickly create your own frame with just a few clicks of the mouse.

The utilities in Perfect Photo Suite 6 are designed to make Photoshop quicker and easier to use. I think that they do. Even the simple tasks I tried seemed easier to do than navigating the vast and complex menus of options that Photoshop has available. The ability to save many layouts, etc., that you create as "presets," is a great help too.

One of the real-world tasks I needed to do was create a frame, with a drop shadow, to apply to 20-30 images. Once I had created the frame, and added the shadow, I saved it as a preset**.** Then, using Perfect Frame from within Elements, I was able to use batch mode to select the images I wanted and apply the preset to them. Really slick and I still have the preset for next time.

As a Photoshop Elements user, I can certainly recommend Perfect Photo Suite 6 for either beginners in Photoshop, or more advanced users who will find it makes their lives easier.

It just makes many of the tasks not only easier to do, but also makes the final result much better. Photo Suite 6 also includes many libraries containing sample frames,

backgrounds, effects, and presets which add a more creative and professional look to the images.

A major advantage of Photo Suite 6 is that changes to images are saved as Photoshop "Layers," so that they may be reviewed, further edited or deleted in Photoshop.

The documentation downloaded from the OnOne Software website is basically the html help file printed as a PDF file. However, the vast number of how-to videos and Tutorials on the OnOneSoftware University website more than make up for this.

Users of CS4, CS5, Lightroom or Aperture will similarly find that Photo Suite 6 adds great value.

Perfect Photo Suite 6 is a product of OnOne Software Inc., 15333 SW Sequoia Parkway, Suite 150, Portland, Oregon 97224, phone (503)968-1468. Fax: (503)968-1469.

Price: the software can be found at about $250 Street. There is also a 30-day free trial version available.

Technical support is reachable via a problem report form on the website at; http://www.onOneSoftware.com/support/ Support is free to registered users and is available Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm Pacific time.

The OnOne Software "University," containing over 100 free how-to videos, can be found at; http://www.onOneSoftware.com/university/#!/video/welcome-to-the-onone-university Webinars are run several times a week; a timetable is available on the website.

Here is another review of Perfect Photo Suite from an HDR point of view: (HDR, or High Dynamic Range is an image processing technique that attempts to make pictures look more natural by taking multiple pictures at different exposure levels and intelligently stitching them together so that we get a picture that is clear in both, dark and bright areas.)
http://thehdrimage.com/?p=1569