

## **New imaging product from makers of PhotoShop**

By George Garbeck

This summer, while on vacation in California, I visited the San Jose studios of Adobe Systems, the creators of the Photoshop series of computer imaging software. Because of my college friendship with one of their senior artistic directors, I was taken on a fascinating 'behind-the-scenes' tour of their product development department. I was particularly interested and impressed, and I think you will be also, by one of the products that is currently in the works.

Adobe, like any successful business, continually monitors changes in its customer base. The primary imaging editing tools they currently sell are Photoshop, geared toward the professional photographer or studio and Photoshop Elements, geared toward the casual snaphooter. Aware of the upsurge in usage of their products by the 'serious amateur photographer' segment of the market (as they call it), they are planning to introduce a separate product aimed specifically at that market niche. Tentatively called 'Photoshop PSA' this software will, when released, carry an array of powerful image editing tools intended to help solve the particular problems encountered by camera club shutterbugs.

Leading the list of editing tools in the product will be the PSA crop tool. This tool, similar to the Photoshop 7.0 crop tool, automatically scans any pictorial image for a horizon line, and if finding one, adjusts the picture to make sure it is perfectly horizontal! This tool will also determine the primary subject of an image and crop the picture to make sure that the 'subject' is placed within the image according to the rule of thirds. No more judges complaining about centered images! I must report that this tool is not fully developed yet, according to the Adobe engineers, and at this time has a serious 'bug' that at times picks out the wrong object as the primary subject of the image, resulting in some strange compositions. But they are confident that with some tweaking of the program code this anomaly will be resolved.

Another tool of practical use is the bald-sky filter. Upon detecting a bald sky in an image, Photoshop PSA automatically selects and feathers this area with its powerful set of selection tools. A palette opens with choices of different cloud types, cumulus, nimbus, stratus, etc. Upon selecting one of these cloud types and selecting frequency and size options, the bald sky is replaced by the beautiful sky of your choice!

Do you have a nice landscape shot that needs a little oomph to make it an award winner? Perhaps the image needs a person standing in the middle distance to add perspective and a center of interest. (How many times have we heard a judge say that?) The answer is a remarkable new tool, tentatively named the 'people' brush. When called upon from the brush option dialog box, a palette opens with images of dozens of people, in various poses, all wearing some article of PSA red color, grouped by different lighting conditions. With a simple click of the mouse any of these 'people' can be chosen, moved onto your picture and placed in an appropriate location. And since all the people are small enough not to be recognizable, no model release is required!

The PSA clone tool is another amazing feature of this soon-to-be-released application. Do you have an image that has a grouping of 2 or 4 objects, say, flowers for instance? We all know that a photo of even numbered subjects is a definite judge's no-no. Well, the clone tool comes to the rescue. By sampling each of the even numbered subjects and taking some of the distinctive attributes of each, this tool creates a new odd-numbered item that is unique from its companions and can be placed in the photo to create a pleasing (and award winning) composition.

Another example of the thoroughness of the creative minds at Adobe, appears in the 'Save as' command. Aware that judges are quite often influenced by the title of a slide, the wizards behind this new product provide an ingenious way to get that extra point or two in a competition. When the 'Save as' dialog box is opened and you type in the title of your slide you are offered an amazing array of descriptive terms to append to your title's file name. No longer will you enter a slide boringly titled 'Mushroom' now it can be 'Mushroom Etude', 'Mushroom Fantasy', 'Mushroom Explosion', 'A Study in Mushrooms' or any number of other judge-pleasers. Additionally, a random number can, if you choose, be appended at the end of your title, as in 'Egret Symphony # 7'. While it's debatable if these numbers have a positive influence on judges, it is certain they do impress the heck out of other camera club members.

Last, but certainly not least, is the 'Judge' command. When this command is selected from the drop-down menu, Photoshop PSA accesses its database of over 1000 PSA judges and their scoring proclivities. Through the use of sophisticated algorithms, your photograph is then scored according to a scientific averaging of the preferences and prejudices of these judges. You choose from several possible methods of scoring such as the 1-9 scale used in club competitions or the 3-27 scale. The option to allow the user to delete specific judges from the database is currently being considered by the programmers.

This feature-packed program is scheduled for release in the spring. At this time they are considering a suggested retail price of \$299 but I'm sure it will be available for less through discount retailers. I know I can't wait!