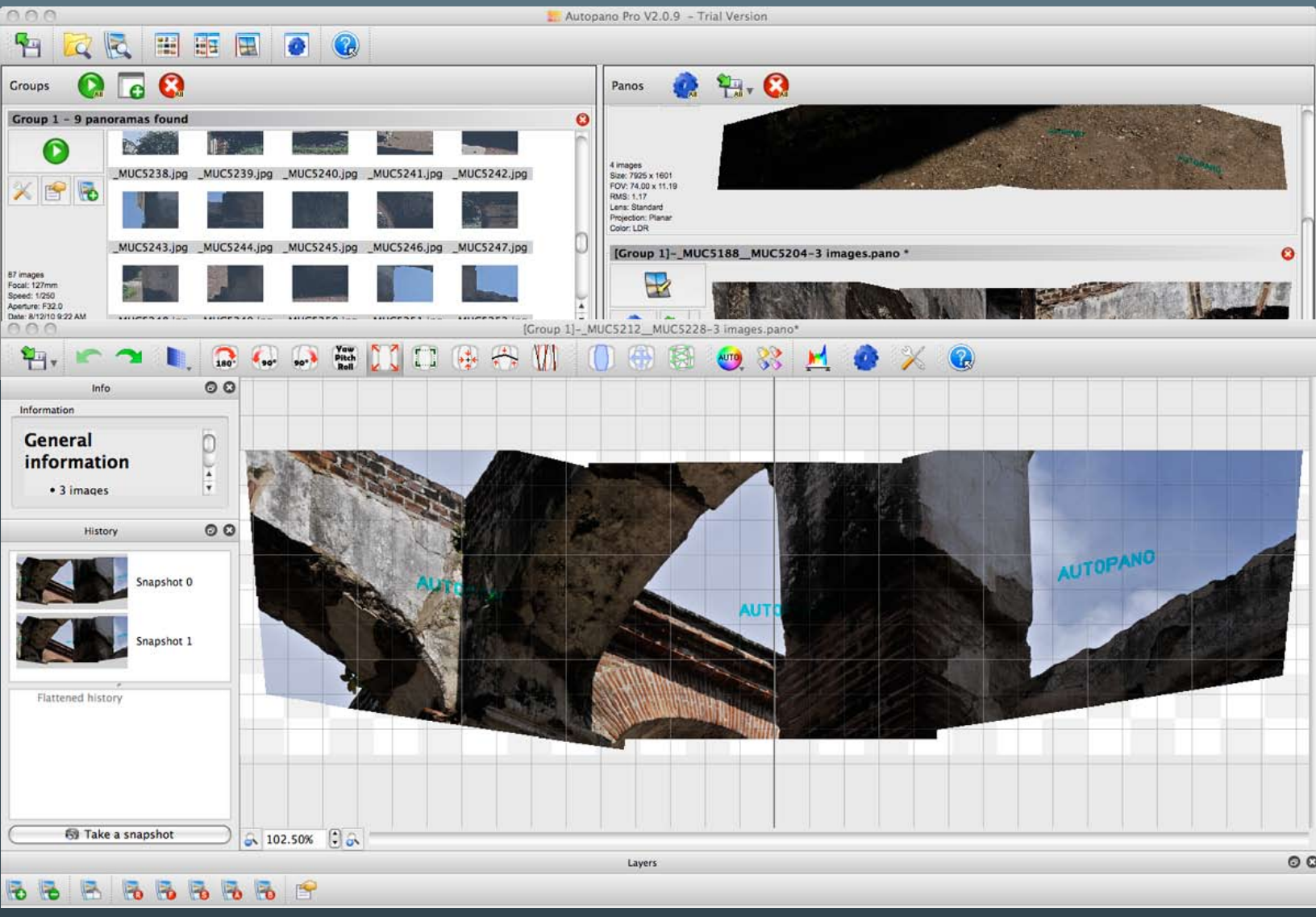
FLAAR Reports

November 2010

Digital Photography Software Beyond Photoshop



Nicholas Hellmuth

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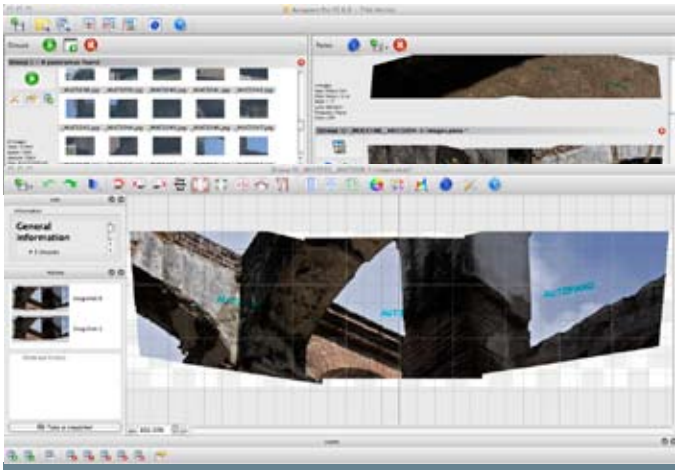

Panorama stitching software Autopano Pro from: app Kolor presented at Photokina 2010

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Introduction

Two factors have keep my photography conservative (meaning I don't run my photos through tons of software)

First, I am a purist. I prefer a photograph that results from what actually existed, rather than what I can fake in a software.

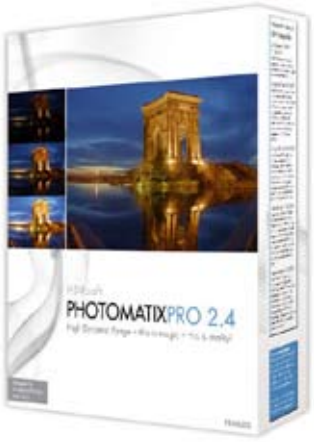
Second, most software exaggerates the effects it can produce. This does not whateover mean the software is at fault: it is the photographer at fault (either they are not a purist, or they don't-know-when-to-stop. (but every photographer should do as they wish, but in extreme cases, this is art photography, as an expression of art; it is not photography in the purist sense.

Third, I do not myself have time to handle my photographs in any software. My job is to raise the funds to pay for the hardware, and cover the expenses of the field trips

But all that said, in fact I can also understand that software other than Photoshop can benefit your images, albeit I would always prefer such software applied without extremes. One main reason why software by a dedicated company (other than Adobe) tends to be better than the same feature within Adobe is because Adobe has hundreds of features. But if an independent company is adept, they can do more on their one subject than can Adobe (which is distracted by the other x-hundred features of Photoshop).

A good example would be masking software: if it is made by a company dedicated to masking images, this may well be better than the masking function within Photoshop.

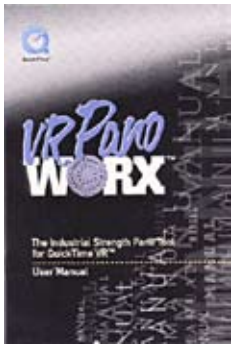
Here are examples of the software that the FLAAR photography team uses (in addition to Adobe Photoshop; obviously we have many licenses for Photoshop, Adobe inDesign, CS of all levels, etc).



Photomatix HDR Software

Viewfinder software for Betterlight panoramic photography.

Capture One software.



VR Toolbox for Virtual Reality

Bibble Labs, 4.1, E 20 – E 28

I see Bibble at many photo expos. From their current catalog I would consider this as a basic alternative to a lite version of Adobe Photoshop.

Realize that no matter how good an alternative brand is (for general Photoshop), I do not know many (or really any) graphic designers or students who would even consider anything other than the original authentic Adobe Photoshop.

DxO Labs, 4.1, F 10 – G 19

DxO Labs booth was not out in a hall, but was hidden next to a restaurant, ironically next to the FLAAR photo exhibit in the main passage between Halls 2 and 4. Since there was no actual DxO booth (but only a sign and then an empty hallway), I never ventured back down the hall to find them.

We would assume they would have exhibited their DxO Optics Pro 6.5, which is their update to their software. The new features of this software are:

- optical corrections,
- geometrical corrections,
- RAW conversion
- Dust removal
- Color and exposition control.

So it seems that DxO is moving beyond just being for lens distortion correction.

None of our photography team and none of our graphic design photo imaging team use any DxO software, but that is simply because we all have Adobe Photoshop and we don't have any test versions of DxO software. We would need a site license for our staff because if only one person in the group has a software, then it gets dropped if it is not accessible to everyone in the team.

But I am interested in DxO software and would consider evaluating how this software could assist our digital photography image processing.

HeliconSoft

Helicon Focus Pro works with both Windows PC and Mac operating systems. This is important to notice, as some after-market software alternatives are PC only.

Helicon Focus Pro booth at Photkina 2010

Nicholas Hellmuth and Sofia Monzón at Helicon Focus Pro booth at Photokina 2010

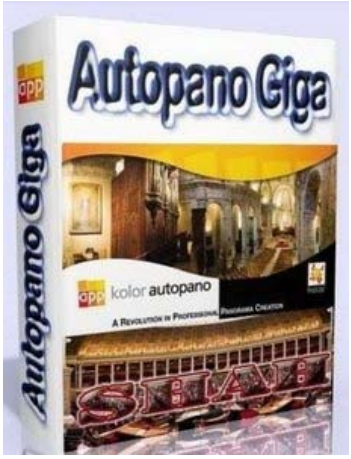
Kolor

Kolor offers software for:

- panorama stitching (autopano pro, autopano giga)
- Virtual tour software (panotour and panotour pro)

We would be interested in evaluating all software related to Gigapan-like camera systems. We like the Gigapan Epic Pro software but would like to see what else out there might be even better.

Globall was the German distributor of products of Kolor.com



Autopano Giga from Kolor software.

NiK Software

The company was initially Nik Multimedia. Years back there was a German partner if I remember correctly, but evidently they were long ago bought out.

Nik Software makes a diverse range of five software products. The ones I would like to concentrate on are those that have the potential to go beyond Photoshop.

- Dfine 2.0, (sic) noise reduction software
- Silver Efex Pro, for top quality black-and-white photography.
- Sharpener Pro 3.0

Contact info for Nik Software is: infous@niksoftware.com
Corporate Headquarters Nik Software, Inc. Phone (619) 725-3150

Nik Software booth at Photkina 2010

Nik Software booth at Photkina 2010

On One Software

They offer several software packages. One, PhotoTools, could be considered as a basic digital photo imaging software for people who don't want the high cost of Adobe Photoshop, or don't need all the artistic tools (Photoshop has many tools that the photographer will never use).

But the software which is of potential interest if you already have Photoshop would be:

Mask Pro 4
Focal Point
Genuine Fractals 6

Stellar Phoenix

When I press the wrong button, or otherwise mess up my CF memory card, I simply FedEx it to Hoodman and they return me a DVD with all the lost images. But it would be nice to have this capability yourself. Thus we suggest you check out photo recovery software from Stellar Phoenix.

Topaz Labs

Topaz Adjust, HDR from a single photo or rescue an underexposed image
Topaz Simplify, comparable to what you can surely do with Photoshop
Topaz deNoise, remove noise
Topaz Detail, halo-free sharpening.
Topaz Clean, "cleaning" and image. I would need to see this to understand it
Topaz ReMask, I would want to compare this with a dedicated software such as Mask Pro 4.

So de-noising can be done with a higher level sofware, Dfine from Nik Software
HDR can be done by a dedicated HDR software
Etc.

I would intuitively prefer a dedicated software.

Upoint Technologies

This company is listed as "powering" HDR Efex Pro. But Nik Software is the web site which is listed as the place to get information. Yet in the Nik full suite, HDR Efex Pro software is not included (or even listed).

HDR Efex Pro is a good example of a software that I would consider as potentially better than anything Photoshop offers for the basic reason that Upoint Technologies dedicates itself to creating a high dynamic range software.

Other software for digital imaging of digital photographs

We do not list or evaluate the tons of other software that is intended for introductory level and/or for

offering a low-cost version of the photo editing aspects of Adobe Photoshop. No, we do not own stock in Adobe, but if you intend to make a name for yourself in digital photography, art, or graphic design, not many people will take you seriously if you don't use Adobe Photoshop. I mention Bibble in the list because they exhibit at most major photography expos and their brand name is well known. But I do not list the dozen other options for Photoshop Elements at the entry level.

But where people could potentially allow you to stand out from a crowd of Photoshop-users, is if you do use Photoshop but you have taken the time and effort to find software which is even better for specific tasks.

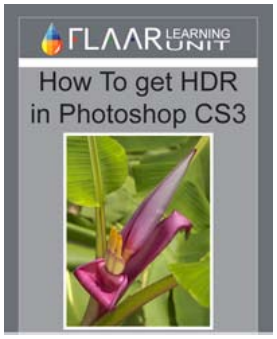
What software would FLAAR like to evaluate
Here is a list of the software that we would like to evaluate during 2011

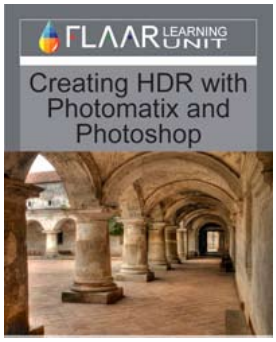
- Artizen HDR
- DynamicPhoto HDR
- easyHDR
- Essential HDR
- HDR Darkroom
- Adobe Lightroom
- Bokeh by Alien Skin Software
- Exposure 3 by Alien Skin Software
- Perfect Photo Suite 5.5
- LensDoc 3.0, Andromeda Software.
- Vignette, The Imaging Factory
- Tiffen DFX digital filter software
- VR Toolbox software.
- Panoweaver 5.00

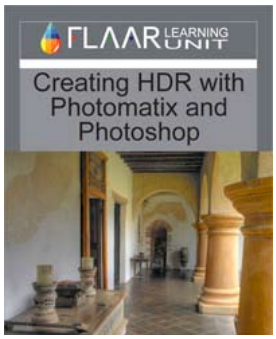
Here is a list of the software that we would like to evaluate during 2011. Since we did not notice these products at Photokina 2010 and since we do not yet have any of this software we can only list the names, but can't yet comments on the capabilities of these products.

FLAAR Reports

Here are some of the FLAAR evaluations of digital imaging software for digital photography

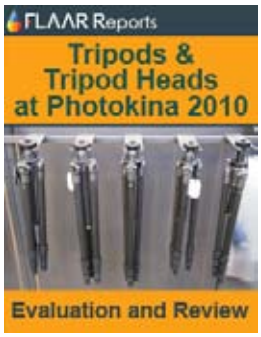


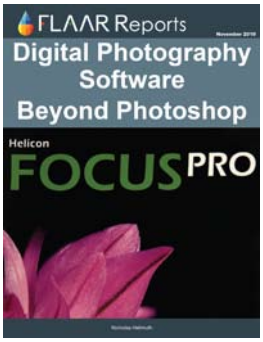


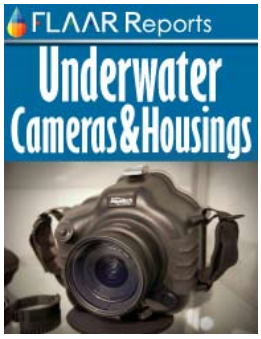


FLAAR Reports

These are the FLAAR Reports on Photokina 2010







Here are the topics that we will be working on during December (2010) and into 2011