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Serif PhotoPlus 11 PC software

Can its 11th installment really be the one to make a difference?

by Stephen Patrick published on 5 December 2006

One of the complaints levelled at digital photography is that it's a flat medium.

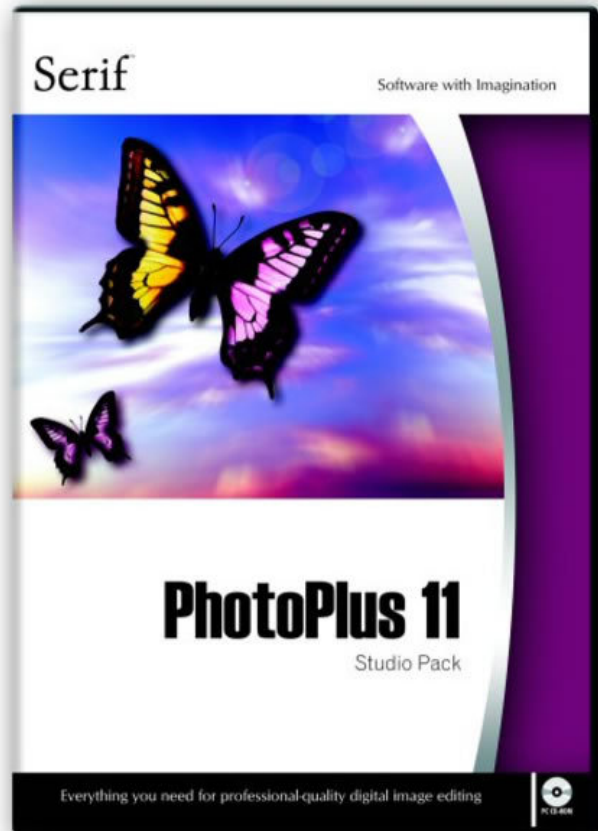
What this means is that the camera doesn't understand the nuances of a 3D world, which is why every digital photo comes to life with even the most basic of edits.

It seems there are as many editing packages as there are brands of camera and Serif Photoplus may be one of the longest running, but it also seems to be one of the most overlooked, which is a shame.

Now in its eleventh incarnation there is a lot to recommend here. For instance, as with other Serif products, the emphasis is on ease of use, so if you simply want to resize and touch-up the odd blemish you can. However, if you're feeling confident, this package is diverse enough to grow with your ambitions.

Of the new features, QuickFix Studio is possibly the best highlight of this simple approach. It's a one-stop solution that allows you to change the brightness and alter the contrast of any image as well as sort out the shadows and highlights with the minimum of fuss. As it's all handled by sliders, you can instantly see what's happening and choose the levels your happiest with. There are a host of other tools you can use, including the obvious red-eye and, straightening and cropping tools, and all of them can be found on the same scrolling palette, making it easy to get the results you want.

If you're keen to get more from your digital images then you'll need to get to grips with the concept of layers, which allow you to create different effects on different transparent layers. There are even adjustment layers, which allow you to take the tools you've learnt above and



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apply them to areas of an image, so you build up a whole without affecting the original layer. This form of non-destructive editing is often reserved for more expensive packages, so it's a welcome addition here.

As with most of the tools here, Serif has taken a great deal of the stress and need for experience out of getting quick and effective results. There are a host of other tools, including a Filter Gallery and tools for turning your photos into virtual drawings.

If there is one problem we found with the package, then all this simplicity doesn't come cheap on resources, as you'll need a decent PC to keep things ticking over. We used a 2GHz PC with 1024MB of memory and while simple crops and edits are easy, once you start building up layers, saving can cropping starts to take longer than we expected. This is a small complaint in a package that was otherwise great to use.

VERDICT

Serif PhotoPlus 11 is a great package with a great deal to recommend it to the first time user as well as the experienced photo-editor looking for a new challenge. True, it's not the most powerful editing suite on the market but at £60, it's a realistic compromise.

At a glance

What is it?

Image editing software

Good

Very easy to use, powerful

Bad

Quite resource heavy

Verdict

It's the editing suite that never gets headlines but it's powerful and extremely easy to use and the new features make it a potential contender

Price £60

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10