

Adobe Photoshop Elements 6 - Mac

Can this improve on Apple's iPhoto?

by Stuart Miles published on 8 April 2008

Adobe launched its entry-level photo-editing package Adobe Photoshop Elements 6 on the PC last year. Now 6 months later Apple Mac OS X users get to have a go too. But with iPhoto bundled free in the box of every laptop and desktop machine sold by Apple should you bother? We get image editing to find out.

Following Adobe's shift to the charcoal grey interface, Elements for the Mac has been broken down into two programs. The Photo Editor and Adobe Bridge, the organiser.

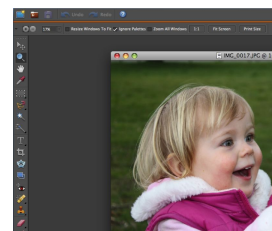
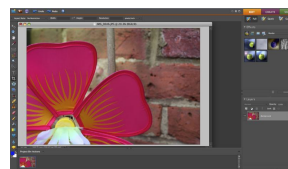
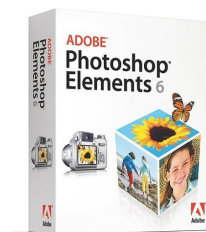
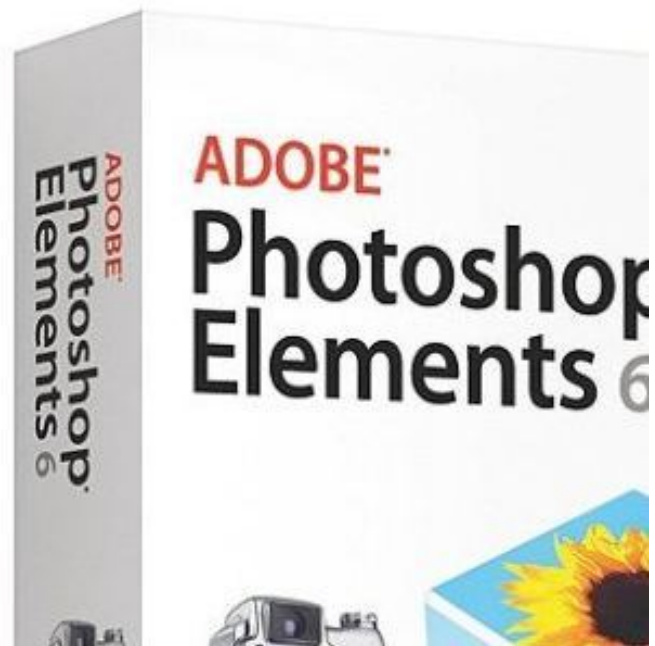
If you think you have heard of Adobe Bridge before, that's because you have. It is the same image organising software bundled with Adobe's more professional and considerably more expensive CS3.

For the most part you get you get the same functionality, however some of the advanced organising tools and features have been disabled for Elements users - mainly access to Adobe's Stock Photos online, Adobe's Photographer's Directory, Version Cue and Device Central, all of which the average Photoshop beginner isn't going to miss.

The interface of Bridge is incredibly easy to use, offering you a main window where images are displayed, with further secondary windows offering you the chance to filter the information presented or to see specific details regarding the photo - like the camera used - all at a quick glance.

Keywords can be attached so you can find your images quickly and it's considerably easier to manage than Adobe's Lightroom interface.

New to this version is something that Adobe calls Stacks. The basic premise is that if you have multiple images of virtually the same thing you



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can stack them together to save space and save you time when searching. One to file under "simple, but useful" it's a small tweak that's likely to help you out, but not change your life.

However, it seems that the transition to Adobe Bridge (which is a good one) means that one of the new PC features - Smart Folders - that allowed you to automatically create folders based on metadata, such as pictures taken with certain cameras, lenses, and other information, has been lost. Again it's not a bad thing, but it's worth noting if you are switching and expecting this feature.

Once you have got the hang of organising and assigning keywords to your images you can move on to image editing itself.

This is where phase two of the software kicks in and you get a paired down image editor aimed at enthusiasts rather than professionals.

Opening in full screen and unable to be shrunk (very annoying - have Adobe forgotten how most Mac folk work for a moment?), the screen offers a bunch of tools down the left-hand side, as well as three main windows on the right titled Edit, Create and Share.

Edit, as it implies allows you to edit your photos applying filters, masks or simply and more likely, fixing your images for contrast and red-eye. Here you can opt for Quick or Guided and the two options either give you a quick fix or give you instructions on how to fix things and what to look out for.

For the newbie to digital photo editing the Guided option is the same as the Quick fix, but instead of being just a scroll bar with terminology that might not make sense there are explanatory paragraphs so you have some idea of what your actions will result in.

Other features include better cropping

At a glance

What is it?

Photo editing and organising software

Good

Adobe Bridge, editing features, Kodak tie-in

Bad

Elements window insists on being full screen, web galleries dated

Verdict

Compared to iPhoto you get more image management, editing features, and control, but whether it's £70 more useful is debatable

Price £72.99

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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functionality, and most scarily of all the ability to replace a person's face with another by the click of a button, which on further inspection worked very well. The head replacement tool will be praised and loved by those who like taking group photos as it allows you to mash a collection of photos of the same group together easily.

Create is all about making stuff and, very much like Apple's iPhoto, you can opt to make Photo Books, Photo Collage, Web Photo Galleries and PDF Slide Shows.

Like iPhoto, creating a book is incredibly easy; orders in UK and Europe are placed through Kodak's EasyShare Gallery service.

If you are not about printing, but about web publishing, then the Web Photo Gallery feature, as found in Elements 6 for the PC, is very impressive. At the press of a couple of buttons and a point in the direction of the photos you want to include, the application quickly builds you a website without you having to know any programming. Unfortunately the templates are basic and dated, and while the feature is superb it's not a patch on Apple's iWeb application bundled in the box with your computer, or even Adobe's own web gallery offering in its Lightroom application.

Share offers similar things to Create (they could have been in the same window) and gives you options like sending images as email attachments, ordering prints or burning a CD/DVD of your photos, although not it appears, in a DVD movie experience, just as a backup option.

VERDICT

Photoshop Elements 6 for the Mac might have the same name as the PC version but there are plenty of differences, mainly how you go about managing your images.

Adobe Bridge (an application that we had installed with CS3 but overlooked) is a very

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impressive organisation tool giving you all the information you might need about your images quickly. Better still it doesn't touch your file management system by insisting on storing your images in yet another folder as iPhoto does.

Get to the main photo-editing aspect of Elements and while the image functionality and editing capabilities are good, there are a few annoyances, mainly the inability to resize the work window (something that is more annoying than you can imagine). Why Adobe has done this we aren't sure. It means that you can't work on two windows at once. The moment you click out of the window Elements disappears.

The Photo Book options are good, but the Web Gallery templates are dated and retro to say the least and probably not worth the bother.

Compared to iPhoto you get more image management, editing features, and control, but whether it's £70 more useful is debatable.

If they can fix that full screen window problem then this might just be worth the upgrade if you are serious about your image management.