NIBBLES & BITS

July 2005

Orange County
IBM PC
Users' Group

Register for 12th Annual SWUG Conference

by Judy Taylour & Patricia Hill, SWUG co-chairs

The 12th Annual Southwest User Group Conference offers fun-filled days packed with vendor presentations, great food, workshops, a chance to talk with user groupies from other UGs, and much more. The conference is held in San Diego and begins on Friday evening, August 5, and ends with lunch on Sunday, August 7. Workshops are offered for UG leaders and members, as well as workshops for enhancing attendee computer knowledge.

This year the conference will be held at the Town and Country Resort Hotel & Convention Center, 500 Hotel Circle North, San Diego 92108.

The conference rate is $99/night, single or double. The rate is guaranteed for three days prior and three days post conference. Come down and include the conference in a vacation! You can't sleep in your RV, but the host hotel has an RV parking area. Please make your reservations by July 14 to ensure you receive the conference rate. The phone number for reservations is 800-772-8527 or go to *www.towncountry.com* to make online reservations; under Make a Reservation, select Group and enter Group Code SUG.

Our activities and the registry will

Photo Story 3: Have digital photo fun!

by Mike Lyons, ORCOPUG president

Microsoft's Photo Story 3 is the most fun I have had with a program in a long time. This program is simple to use, yet lets you be highly creative and gives your photo presentation a very professional look.

Simply import your photos into the program. Arrange the photos by dragging and dropping and add music, narrative, and text to any or all photos. Likewise, photos can be panned or zoomed and 48 different transitions are available at a click of a mouse.

The program allows you to take your finished product and send it to your specific target: email it, create a CD or DVD, or send it to your computer. The program will shrink your animated slide show to fit the desired end use automatically. And anyone can play it on Microsoft's free Window's Media player.

You really have to see this program in action to truly appreciate its capabilities. The more I play with it, the more I discover how truly awesome it is.

So grab a friend and bring them to the July meeting and I'll tell you how to get this program free.

Missing owner sought

by Mike Lyons, ORCOPUG president

An older model HP scanner was donated to the club and placed in the December raffle. A member put three tickets into the dish, but it was won by one of two club tickets.

After the raffle, the board decided to award the member the prize. We would rather an interested member have it than to raffle it at a regular meeting to someone that had no use for it. The problem is we don't remember who put in the three tickets. If you did, please contact Charlie Moore and arrange to pick up your scanner.

Notepad

This month, I toyed with the idea of typing "This space intentionally blank." Usually, a few days before the newsletter goes out, a subject shoulders its way to my attention, and I share it with you in this column.

Nothing of the sort happened this month, however.

Attempting to prime the pump, I hopped onto the Internet and Googled "early computers," and "early software." I had nothing in mind, but hoped for a lightning bolt idea to get me started.

So, it was that I read with fascination and open mouth how the Druids actually "programmed" in the language "R" *(http://tinyurl.com/7k2xf);* and that some "rod memory" still exists today in the form of hazelwood branches tied together in flat bundles and found in a marsh. Unfortunately, in a later era, this early memory was misidentified and used as a footpath. As a result, it was heavily damaged. *http://tinyurl.com/9lhm7*

In amazement, I also read that Stonehenge was a "computer" of sorts, too, capable of complex astrological computations. *http://tinyurl.com/aftca*

I was preparing to copy the most riveting bits of information for Notepad, when another thought crossed my mind. "Is this for real?"

I'm glad I didn't rush to print with these found "facts." But, I admit to being duped, because in the world of computers I've learned the fantastic regularly becomes reality. Therefore, I readily accepted ancient computing abilities. It just seemed plausible.

I suppose this is why radio's "War of the Worlds" was so riveting. Using what is tangible and exaggerating possible developments can transform the fantastic into the real.

Also, I learned from my dip into "history" that my normal skepticism becomes suspended in regard to computers. That's good for adapting to new things. It's bad for gullible editors.

Linda Gonse, *editor@orcopug.org*

Letters

APCUG Advisor announces UG conferences

There are several upcoming User Group conferences we wish to share with you. One might be in your neck of the woods and details are presented as follows:

• **August 5-7, 2005:** Southwest User Group Conference, San Diego. Check *www.swugconf.org* details for Fun in the Sun & Computers, Too! This is the 12th Annual Conference offering fun-filled days packed with Vendor pre-sentations, great food, Workshops, a chance to talk with User Groupies from other UGs, and much more. The Conference begins on Friday evening and ends with lunch on Sunday. IMPORTANT DATES: Hotel group rate reservations required by July 14; Early bird conference registration ($40) by July 15. For User Groups attending this conference, the deadline for entering the Newsletter & Website contests is July 5. Contact Judy Taylour at *wugconf@usa.net* for further information.

• **September 17, 2005:** Chicago Computer Society Mini Expo IV, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, IL. This one-day expo will include Workshops, Door prizes, Commemorative t-shirts and more. There will also be a grand prize: Hewlett Packard digital camera/printer ensemble. Attendees will receive one ticket and be able to purchase more tickets. The $15.00 registration fee is due by September 10, 2005 ($10.00 for CCS and APCUG member group attendees). Contact Bill James at *bjames@apcug.net* for further information.

• **October 7, 8 & 9, 2005:** Raincoast, Tacoma, Washington. Check at *www.raincoast.info/* for more details.

Raincoast is a Platform Neutral computer Conference for individuals who want to know more about cutting edge technology and for those who want to network with like-minded computer Users. The conference is sponsored by the Raincoast Association of User Groups and features Roundtable topics for Windows, Mac and Linux platforms. Raincoast 2005 will be at the LaQuinta Inn in Tacoma, WA.

The Registration fee is $50; register by August 5 and the fee is $45; after September 9 the Registration fee is $60. For more informa-

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**Add your email address to the list.
Send your information to:
*editor@orcopug.org.***

June raffle winners

Viewpoint LiveArt 98, $39*
Ed O'Donnell, Winner
Cybermedia Uninstaller, $30*
Ralph Seymour, Winner
Quick Bytes Cookbook, $10*
Terry Schiele, Expired
Stan Leese, Winner
Symantec bag, $5*
Joe Gionet, Not Present
Charles Burgwin, Winner
G&C SpellCatcher, $30*
Joe Francis, Winner
Field Guide to the Internet, $10*
Don Ogden, Not Present
Harold Wann, Not Present
Michael Lyons, Winner
Visitalk.com t-shirt, $5*
Larry Klees, Winner

*Estimated value

Submitted by Charlie Moore

Special Raffle Winner!

Terry Terrazas gave the correct answer to the keyword at the June meeting and took home three prizes: Networking Annoyances, Internet Annoyances, and a SANDisk Cruzer thumb drive.

Members' renewal dates

MAY — Terry Schiele
JUNE — Bob Welburn, Chuck Wheeler
JULY — Herman Beverburg, Tony Lake
AUGUST — Stan Leese, Sid Liptz, Michael Moore, Don Ogden
SEPTEMBER — Don Faisy
SEPTEMBER — Siles Bazerman, Gary Covington III, Larry Klees, Ed O'Donnell, Darryl Swensen

Submitted by Charlie Moore

Membership Application

New Member ☐   **Renewal*** ☐
* Please fill out all the blanks below to help us keep your information updated in our database.

Last Name _____   First Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____   State _____   Zip _____

Home Phone (____)_____   Work Phone (____)_____

E-mail Address _____

Areas of Interest/Comments _____
ORCOPUG meets the second Tuesday of every month starting at 6:30 p.m. Dues are $25 per year. Please see our website at www.orcopug.org for meeting location and map, program announcements and contact information.

Make your check payable to **ORCOPUG** and mail to:
ORCOPUG, P.O. BOX 716, Brea, California 92822-0716

(Please fiill out this application and mail it today!)

User group deals

Members' Only! page offers more discounts!

Membership in ORCOPUG entitles you to access the Members' Only area to take advantage of dozens of user group offers. Just go to *http://www.orcopug.org.* Click on the *"members' only"* link. In the password dialog box, type your first initial and last name (lower case, no spaces). The password is **R** followed by your member number. (If you forgot your member number, send an email to Charlie Moore, *charlie@orcopug.org.*)

See the August column of Bob Click, The Deals Guy, on our Members' Only! page at www.orcopug.org.

Thanks to these vendors

Companies who donated prizes to our 2004 fundraising raffle are: Acronis, Belkin, O'Reilly & Associates, Stardock, Ulead, 2nd Story Software, Cable Organizer.com, Dantz, Iolo Technologies, Logitech, No Starch Press, Photodex Corp., SmartDraw.com, StompSoft, TechSmith, Time Value Software, and WhiteCanyon.

Magazine discounts only for user group members

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Computer Games	$10.95	$20.95	$29.95
Computer Gaming World	$14.95	$28.95	$41.95
Computer Shopper	$16.97	$32.95	$47.95
Dr. Dobbs Journal	$15.95	$30.95	—
Mac Home Journal	$15.97	$29.97	—
Mac World	$12.95	—	—
Maximum PC	$ 9.95	$18.95	$27.95
Microsoft System Journal	$21.95	$39.95	—
PC Gamer	$12.95	—	—
PC Magazine	$25.97	$48.95	$68.95
(22/44/66 issues)			
PC World	$16.95	—	—
Videomaker	$11.95	$21.95	—
Wired	$ 6.00	$12.00	$17.00

Revised January 2005

These prices are for new subscriptions and renewals. All orders must be accompanied by a check, cash or Money Order. Make payable to Herb Goodman, and mail to: **Herb Goodman, 8295 Sunlake Drive, Boca Raton, FL 33496.** Call or write: 561-488-4465, *hgoodman@prodigy.net.*

Please allow 10 to 12 weeks for your magazines to start. For renewals you must supply an address label from your present subscription to insure the correct start of your renewal. I will mail a renewal notice to every subscriber about 3 months prior to their expiration date. In the last few years, many computer magazine subscribers have used my services for over 300 titles I carry, also at excellent prices. Just email me for other prices.

*Please double-check the date with the store!   *Submitted by Carl Westberg*

Have you thanked a vendor lately?

by Judy Taylour, APCUG Advisor

It's important for our User Groups' continuing relationship with vendors to remember to thank them for the variety of ways they support our Groups: such as meeting presentations, at the Annual Conference or Regional conferences, providing Presentation-in-a-Box, boxes of software and goodies, free magazine subscriptions, discounts on software, review books, door prizes, prizes for a special holiday, and much more.

If your group reviews software, it is vital to send the newsletter containing the review of the vendor's product in a timely manner. Most vendors like to receive the review within 90 days. If someone from your group attends the Annual or Regional Conference and writes an article for their newsletter about vendor support at the meeting, don't forget to send a copy of the newsletter to each vendor mentioned.

I'm sure all of the User Groups have received support from many vendors in 2004/2005 — don't forget to say thank you. Our User Group liaisons at the various companies need tangible evidence that the User Group community is benefiting from their support.

SWUG…

(Continued from page 1)

be in the Grand Ballroom area of the Convention Center. We have Pacific Salons One through Seven reserved. You should be given a property map when you check in. If they don't offer one, ask for it.

Registration is: $40 if your registration is postmarked by July 15; $50 if your registration is postmarked by July 22; and, $75 after July 23 and at the conference. The fee includes six meals, vendor presentations, workshops, conference T-shirt and Welcome Bag.

To register, complete the attached registration form (one for each

Software Reviews...

Exclusive review for Nibbles & Bits!

Snagit 7.2

by Neil Longmuir, Winnipeg PC User Group Inc.

Snagit 7.2 from TechSmith is the ultimate tool for screen capture. If it can be displayed on a computer screen, Snagit 7.2 can capture it. This is the first version of Snagit I've used. What impressed me the most was the easy to use interface. The Snagit 7.2 interface lets first time users get down to work immediately. There's no guessing on how to do things. So exactly what is a screen capture?

TechSmith's definition of a screen capture is: "A screen capture is the process of copying what you see on your screen. Snagit captures various types of data in dozens of different ways, enabling you to capture, edit and share anything on your screen."

Hardware Requirements
- Windows 98. ME, Windows NT 4.0 (with SP6a or later), 2000 or Windows XP
- Minimum 90 MHz processor but a 400 MHz or higher processor is recommended
- 16 Mb of RAM but 64 Mb of RAM is preferred
- 20 Mb of free hard disk space
- Web capture requires Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher
- Snagit Instant Messenger output requires Windows Messenger 4.7 or higher or MSN Messenger 6.0 or higher
- Note: the Printer Capture tool is *not* available on Windows NT
- The Snagit add-ins for Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Outlook work with Office 2000 and Office XP
- The Snagit add in for Internet Explorer works with Internet Explorer 5.0 or later
- The Snagit plug-in for Adobe FrameMaker works with FrameMaker 5.5 or later

As you can see, the hardware requirements are minimal.

Installation

The installation of Snagit was simple and straight forward. In less than three minutes I had Snagit installed and configured. During installation you are given the option of creating a desktop icon and placing a icon in the system tray. Thus, Snagit is available to you immediately whenever you need to capture something.

One word of caution after installing Snagit. The default screen capture resolution is standard VGA, i.e. 640 by 480. Change the default to either 800 by 600 or 1024 by 768. The resulting screen captures will be sharper.
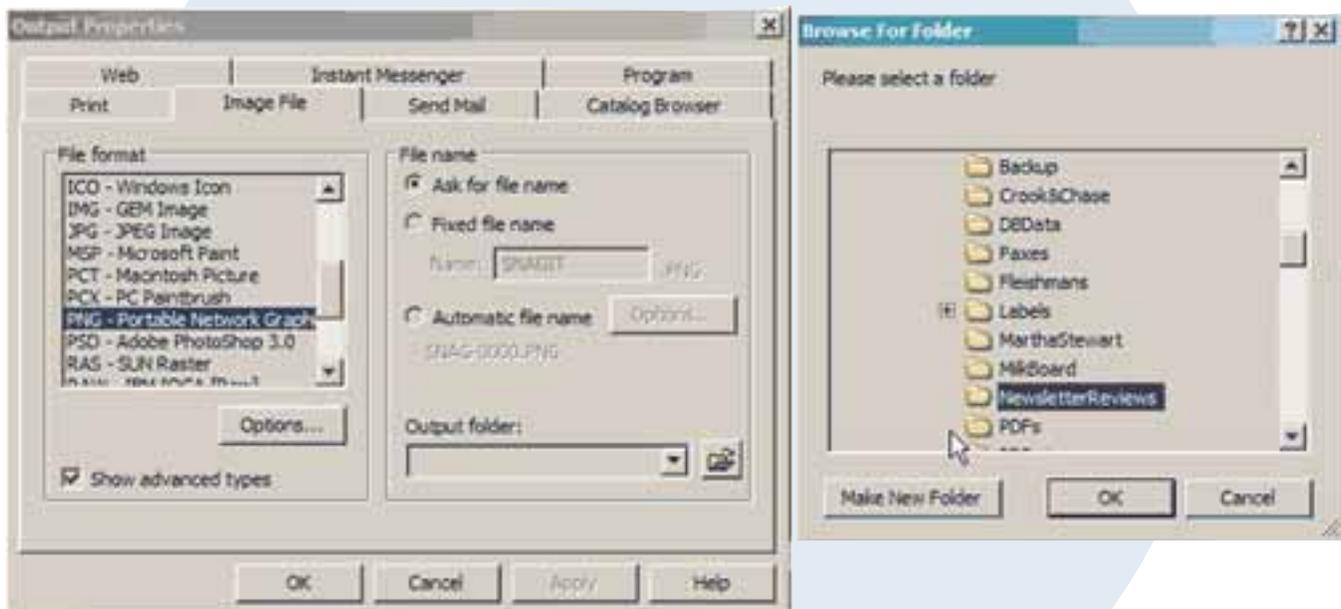
Overview of some of Snagit 7.2 Features

The five most popular ways to use Snagit are:
- Region Capture: capture a rectangular shape anywhere on your desktop.
- Share an entire Web page: Snagit lets you capture an entire web page window including the parts that are not visible to you on screen, i.e. a scrolling window
- Capturing Window menu choices are not easy. Snagit captures

drop-down and cascading menus from Windows programs easily and without a hitch

• Text Capture is one great feature. Text Capture enables you to capture text in tab-delimited format to import into spreadsheets and databases. This feature alone is worth the cost of Snagit. How many times have you had to re-enter data that could be easily captured with Snagit? The time saving of this feature is worth its weight in gold.

• Object Capture is another nifty tool that lets you capture a specific item on your desktop. These objects can be buttons, icons, toolbars, etc.

Check out the *http://www.techsmith.com* for an overview of Snagit 7.2 features.

Each of these features can make your next presentation article or paper even better. By combining the power of Snagit 7.2 there is no need not to explain clearly and precisely what you want to say. That screen capture is worth a thousand words. Also, the Snagit user guide is precise and is all that is required to use this product effectively.

The Edit Toolbox

Without a doubt, the *Edit Toolbox* is one of the most powerful features of Snagit. Using the tools in the Edit Toolbox, you can communicate ideas and quickly point out important features on your screen..

The Snagit Editor is a very powerful tool for adding arrows, text, callout or other special effects to any image file. The Snagit Editor also allows you to edit text files and view video. Interestingly enough I was unable to view files with the extension *.wmv. Because you can do practically anything you want with an image file, it would be very handy to be able to do minor video editing. For example, your video clip may be five minutes long and the only part of the video clip would want to show is the middle two minutes. It would be great to be able to create a new file with just the two minutes of video you want.

Snagit Studio is another part of the *Edit Toolbox*. The Snagit Studio lets you annotate your images and save them in a project file which can be later edited and modified. The final tool in the *Edit Toolbox* is the Batch Convert. Batch convert will convert any number of files from one image format to a single file format, i.e. all your *.psd (Adobe Photoshop file format) to *.jpg. What sets this converter apart from other products is that you can add special effects, such as watermarks, borders or drop shadows to these output files.

Hands on Capturing Screens

Depending on the type of capture you require, choose a type, Image, Text, Video or Web button. Once you have chosen the type of capture, select your input options through the Input menu. Also, if you're not sure of what to do or need some help, the Quick Start wizard will guide you step by step through the process of capturing a screen. Personally, I don't think you will need the Quick Start wizard. The Snagit 7.2 interface is real easy to use right out of the box. Figure 1 shows the Snagit 7.2 screen.

After capturing a screen, select your output settings from the Output menu. Click on either the Capture button or use your user defined hot key to activate capturing the screen. The global default hot key is Ctrl-Shift-P. However, the end user can change the hot key by selecting Tools > Program Preferences. Perhaps the best feature of the output menu is to be able to send the screen capture to several different output devices at one time, such as, print it on your

printer, e-mail it to someone or convert it to a file.

Conclusion

In real life, I've used Snagit 7.2 to capture screens for my newsletter reviews and love it. It's simple to use and it works flawlessly. Be sure to check out TechSmith's web site for the top 50 uses of Snagit. Best of all, you can make Alt+PrtScrn history. Instead use Snagit. The only real change I would like to see is that the screen capture default should be a minimum of 800 x 600 instead of the current default VGA of 640 by 480.

I was very pleased to see that both PostScript files (EPS) and Adobe Photoshop files (PSD) are supported.

Educators! Snagit 7.2 is a must have utility for all your staff. Class outlines and notes can be better than they've ever been. Class handouts can always be up-to-date. Try adding text boxes or a callout to emphasize a particular point.

At $39.95 Snagit is a steal. No only does it work great for the occasional user who needs a single screen capture, it also works great for big jobs that require many screen captures.

Neil's Rating iiiii Plus

A 30 day trial version can be downloaded from TechSmith's web site: *http://www.techsmith.com*

Speaking of myths...

The Social Security Administration has a new web site that debunks some of the popular fabrications about the federal insurance program. (Example: President Franklin Roosevelt promised that "participation in the program would be completely voluntary.")

This interesting history lesson, titled "Myths and Misinformation about Social Security," is at *www.ssa.gov/history/InternetMyths.html* (capitalize the I and M) or go to *http://tinyurl.com/cj7br*

Submitted by Tony Lake

Image Correction and Enhancement Products from Kodak's Austin Development Center

by Neil Longmuir

DIGITAL ROC Professional plug-in

Most people do not store color negatives, slides and prints correctly. It is only when they want to make a print or view a slide that they realize the original is no longer a true original. That original image will have a color shift of some kind. Prints, color slides and color negatives will deteriate over time generally producing either a blue or red tint or cast. These same images can have a different color cast if they were made under incandescent or fluorescent lighting. The DIGITAL ROC Pro plug in will automatically restore and balance color in a faded or old image.

The ROC plug-in will do three things automatically: correct color, restore color and balance the color of the image. The professional version of this plug-in will let you control image contrast and brightness. The professional version also supports 16 bit editing of color images.

How many of you have an old color slide that was **not** taken on Kodachrome? Recently a user group member brought over some slides that he wanted to scan for a presentation. The slides were taken in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These slides were shot on Ekatchrome. As expected, all these slides had a very red cast and were very contrasty. At the time, I did not have the DIGITAL ROC Pro plug-in. We spent several hours using Photoshop adjusting these slides. I was not happy at all with the end result, but he was delighted. Yes, you could see the image, but the quality was far from exciting. These images would be a good test for DIGITAL ROC Pro plug-in.

I opened the first image and ran the ROC Pro plug-in filter using the default settings. In less than two seconds I had an image that was significantly better than the original. Looking closely at the image, I could visibly see the grain structure of the original Ekatchrome (remember, the old films did not have nearly as fine a grain structure as the current films). I then ran the DIGITAL GEM Pro plug-in, using the default settings. Now the image was starting to look really good. I did a few minor tweaks with the levels and curve settings in Photoshop and had a terrific image.

The question to ask now is *"How did they do that?"* The first thing to remember is that Kodak has a lot of experience in the theory of color, a lot more than I personally have. To restore an old image, requires knowledge. The old image will have a definite color cast or tint. A digital image has three color channels, red, green and blue. The DIGITAL ROC Pro plug-in uses proprietary algorithms and analyses each color gradient for each of the channels. The results of the analysis are used to restore faded or lost color by generating an optimal tone curve for each channel. After analyzing each of these channels, the DIGITAL ROC Pro plug-in, using advanced algorithms, optimizes the brightness and contrast of the image. The final adjustment corrects any remaining color tints. The algorithm is so good that it will even correct *some* over or under-exposed images. The DIGITAL ROC Pro plug-in does its editing in 16 bit mode while the ROC plug-in does its editing in 8 bit mode. The plug-in has a few simple controls that are easy to use.

Black and white images can be restored as long as the original print is scanned in RGB mode. The resulting print in many cases will be better than the original print was in the first place.

DIGITAL GEM Professional Plug-in

The DIGITAL GEM Professional plug-in is used to automatically reduce image noise and grain. In certain films grain is visible to the naked eye. In digital images, noise, the equivalent of grain in film shows up generally in shadow areas as colored artifacts. A digital image with either grain or noise will be improved without losing image detail. There will be no excessive softening or blurring of the image. The DIGITAL GEM Pro Plug-in contains two noise suppression algorithms: the first noise suppression algorithm works on images with extreme noise. This algorithm works fast and is very aggressive. The second algorithm is much gentler working "focusing on removing film grain patterns while preserving image detail. The professional plug-in has a **Noise Preview Screen** which in turn allows the user to define and view the actual noise/grain they want to remove." The suppression type dialogue box shows **Coarse/Noise**. The other option is **Fine/Grain Noise**. There's a little red box in the right hand window. Moving that box around the image will show the grain or noise in the preview window. Thus, the end user can see if there is really a problem or not.

Real-World Testing

A year and half ago, I went to a local Sisters of the Holy Rock concert. The Sisters of the Holy Rock are a group of volunteer singers, male and female, who dress up as nuns to give charity concerts. At the time, I had a Canon G2 digital camera. I sat in the back row. Flash would be of no use, so I set the ISO setting to 400. The Canon G2 is very noisy at ISO 400. I took approximately 125 pictures anyway. I was correct; the images had a lot of noise, especially in the black gowns the singers were wearing. I decided to open a few of the images and apply the DIGITAL GEM Professional plug-in filter. After

playing with the preview screen and several settings, I applied the filter to the images. The end result is I now have 125 very nice, useable images. There is virtually no visible noise in the final prints. In this case, DIGITAL GEM Professional meant the difference between having some very good useable images or just a disk with some images of a concert.

DIGITAL SHO Professional Plug-In

"The DIGITAL SHO Pro Plug-In is software that automatically adjusts the shadows and highlights so that more detail is visible." Images typically have three main areas, shadows (dark areas), midtones and highlights (bright areas). The ideal image is one that has very little difference in exposure between the shadows and highlights. Light is not always perfect. What sets the DIGITAL SHO Pro Plug-In apart from all the others is that the shadows and highlights are adjusted simultaneously and image detail is preserved and **not** lost. This is done by adjusting the **Threshold** slider. The Threshold point is the point between what is considered the
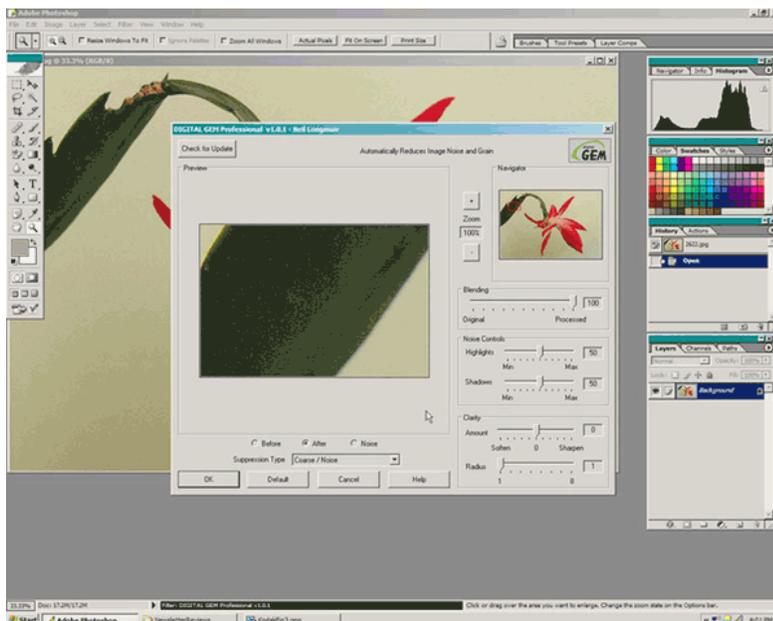
shadows and the point that is considered highlight. In other words, the threshold point is the midtone of the image. The individual Highlight Detail and Shadow Detail sliders will determine the strength of the effect in each area.

Adobe Photoshop CS has its own shadow/highlight option, but I found that it lost image detail. DIGITAL SHO Pro preserved image detail much better.

The preview window is invaluable; because it lets you see immediately the changes you have made. This is important because if you don't like the changes you've made, you can make all the changes you want before applying the plug-in. With real life images I found this plug-in worked great.

In Adobe Photoshop you typically use the dodge or burn tool to lighten or darken part of an image. This gives you a lot of control over the final image at the expense of time. These tools are based on the traditional darkroom techniques. Also, I found the Adobe Photoshop CS filter introduced some noise in the shadows. Personally, I preferred the DIGITAL SHO Professional Plug-in. Time is money.

DIGITAL GEM Airbrush Professional Plug-In

The DIGITAL GEM Airbrush Professional Plug-In is used to automatically smooth skin surfaces without losing detail in eyelashes, hair or losing the overall skin texture. Some of the uses of this plug-in would be to soften lighting in portraits; remove aging shadows etc. This is an ideal tool for retouching a lot image such as school portraits, wedding photos and glamour photo shoots.

With real images, I found this plug-in worked great with noisy images shot at high ISO's such as 1600 or 3200.

Once again the preview window is invaluable. By checking the before and after buttons you can fine tune your final results. "The **Blending** slider controls the strength of the DIGITAL GEM Airbrush effect. Setting the blending slider to 100% is the strongest effect and a setting of 0% has no effect. At 50% blending, the final image is half of the smoothed image blended with half of the original image." More detail is available in the DIGITAL GEM Airbrush user guide.

Actions or macros

Kodak has enhanced these plug-ins even further with four Kodak actions. "These actions provide a variety of benefits from improving plug-in performance on certain types of images to optimizing the plug-in for unique effects to create more beautiful images." After your register your software, the actions can be downloaded. These actions require Adobe Photoshop CS. The natural question is why Adobe Photoshop CS? The answer is that actions are a series of commands. These commands use the Adobe Photoshop CS menu structure to create the actions. The menu structure is different in Adobe Elements and Adobe Photoshop CS. Not all of the menu choices are available or in the same place. Adobe Photoshop CS is the industry standard for editing images.

DIGITAL Gem Preview Window

Kodak…

What is an action? Adobe defines an action as a series of commands, i.e. a **macro** that you play back on a single file or a batch of files. For example, you can create an action that applies an Image Size command to change an image to a specific size in pixels, followed by an Unsharp Mask filter that resharpens the detail, and a Save command that saves the file in the desired format. The commands above are easy for a single image, but to apply these commands to a large number of images is a big job. Creating an action and batch processing all the files simplifies the task.

Most commands and tool operations are recordable in actions. Actions can include stops that let you perform tasks that cannot be recorded (for example, using a painting tool). Actions can include controls that let the end user enter values in a dialog box while playing an action. Actions form the basis for droplets, which are small applications that automatically process all files that are dragged onto their icon.

Both Adobe Photoshop and Adobe ImageReady include a number of predefined actions, although Photoshop has significantly more user-recordable functionality than Image Ready. You can use these actions as is, customize them to meet your needs, or create new actions. I should also point out that actions can be edited. Actions can be applied to a number of images such as a whole directory. Doing a whole directory of images one after another automatically is much faster than applying an action to images one at a time.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Each of the professional plug-ins cost $99.95 US. The standard versions plug-ins cost $49.95 US. Trial versions can be downloaded from *http://www.asf.com* and tried to determine which plug-ins serve your needs best before purchasing. The plug-ins work on both the Windows and Mac computer platforms. I tested the plug-ins with Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0 and 3.0, Adobe Photoshop 7.01 and CS. They worked great with the Adobe products. My personal favourites were DIGITAL ROC Pro, DIGITAL GEM Pro and DIGITAL SHO Pro.

After applying the DIGITAL ROC Professional Plug-In to a batch of images in a directory, I often found myself going back and applying the DIGITAL GEM Professional Plug-In to remove noise or grain. The noise or grain was in the original image, but was not visible. To further improve images, I found myself running the DIGITAL SHO Pro plug-in to open up shadow areas and improve the image even more.

The other two products DIGITAL SHO Professional Plug-In and DIGITAL GEM Airbrush Professional Plug-In worked very well on some other images. The DIGITAL SHO Professional plug-in that helps adjust shadows, contrast and exposure worked very well. Photographers doing a lot of portrait and glamour photography will appreciate the DIGITAL GEM Airbrush Professional filter. Personally, I found the DIGITAL GEM Airbrush filter just a little too aggressive with the Gaussian blur that is applied at the end of the action. Remember, actions can be edited to obtain the look you want. Also don't be afraid to try all four plug-ins on an image, you could get a surprise.

Each of these products are terrific. To depend just on the filters that your software comes with by default does not give you all the tools that are available. You don't know if your images can be made better. Digital photography is definitely the way of today and the future. Both the Kodak standard and professional plug-ins are here today and the future plug-ins will be even better.

Each of these plug-ins, whether the standard or the professional version, will help make some of your images even better. I highly recommend all four of these plug-ins. The end user interface is very clean and easy to use. The plug-in default settings work very well on a most of images. Taking time to use the preview screen in the professional versions can make those same images even better. Anything that can make an image better is definitely worth the money.

Kodak with its professional plug-ins are on the right track with full 16 bit editing. When the 64 bit processors become mainstream, Kodak will be one step ahead with 16 bit plug-in editing because more image detail is preserved. When a image is converted to 8 bit, information is tossed out.

I just can't wait to see what the next great plug-in will be from Kodak. I don't know what it is now, but I would bet money on it that it will be terrific. These plug-ins are a must have for anyone doing image editing. Best of all, using the default settings produce terrific results automatically. In my opinion, these plug-ins are a must have product.

I would like to thank the good folks at Kodak and especially Michael Conley for the software for this review.

Neil's Rating iiiii Plus

Trial versions can be downloaded from: *http://www.asf.com*

Thoughts to pass the time

• Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in hospitals dying of nothing.

• Whenever I feel blue, I start breathing again.

• Why does a slight tax increase cost you two hundred dollars and a substantial tax cut saves you thirty cents?

• In the 60s, people took acid to make the world weird. Now the world is weird and people take Prozac to make it normal.

Submitted by Ted Wirtz

Record your cassette music to a CD!

by Bob Elgines, CRCC Editor, elginesz@rraz.net

Most of the equipment you already have includes the Soundboard and a Cassette player. Next, of course, things needed are a recording program, such as Musicmatch Jukebox and a cable to connect your cassette player with your computer. This basic Jukebox software is available free at: *www.musicmatch.com* (go to JUKEBOX tab and click on "Free Jukebox download," it is over 24 MB in size). The cable is made up of 1/8" phone plugs (RS 274-284c) and a three wire shielded cable. This cable can be purchased or made on your own. (Some of the older cassette players use a larger ¼" phone plug.)

Now we are ready to setup your computer and programs. Connect your cable between the "Output" (might be labeled Headset) of your cassette player and the "Line In" of your computer sound board.

Right click on your speaker icon located on the right hand side of the taskbar. Left click on "Adjust Audio Properties," click on "Audio." Under "Sound Recording" click on "Volume." Select "Line In" and set the input level at approximately 20%, this may have to be changed later, so you can leave this on the screen if you wish.

Next activate Musicmatch Jukebox, then go to "Options"/ "Recorder" / "Settings." Set "Recording Format" to WAV, "Recording Source" to Line In. Now click on "Advance," set "Fadeout" to 1, and under "End of Record Notifications" uncheck "Play sound" & "Eject CD." Click OK.

On the bottom left, click the red "Record" button. Another window appears with a number "one" on the right. You can click here and change the name now or do it later. If you are going to record the complete side of the cassette under one file then name it now; otherwise, if you are going to record one track (or song) at a time then you can change the name later.

Now play your cassette to check out the input level for "no distortion" listening on your computer speakers. If it is too loud and there is distortion then reduce the input level or the volume out of the player. Rewind the cassette.

We are ready to roll. Start your player and press the "Record" button on the lower left window. When the song is over press the "Stop" button, then press "Record" again because the next song will start within a second or two. Then press "Stop"and continue until each song is recorded from the cassette.

Now that we have them in the computer, let's name each one, but keep the names short. Use "Windows Explorer" and go to "My Documents" / "My Music"/ "Artist" / "Album." Here you will find your recordings and you can rename them by right clicking on each one. After you are finished, Exit and go to your CD recording program such as "EZ CD Creator" or "Nero." Now you can grab all of the recordings you made and make an audio CD. (Do not record any faster then 8X, because most players will not accept anything faster)

Another method is using MP3 sound files. If you convert from WAV to MP3 files, you can record up to 150 (or more) songs on a CD instead of just 15.

To convert the WAV files, open up your "Jukebox" program. Go to "File" /

News Bites
Windows Security News

MS Sues Hotmail Spammers

Microsoft is suing an unnamed German company for allegedly inundating **Hotmail users** with spam. The German company allegedly used organizations in the US and the Ukraine to send the unsolicited commercial email.

RealPlayer Gets 4 Updates

RealNetworks has made updates available for four security holes in current and older versions of **RealPlayer.** The most serious of the flaws could allow an attacker to take control of vulnerable systems and are present in RealPlayer for Windows, Mac OS and Linux. Attackers could use specially crafted RealMedia, AVI files and MP3 files to exploit the vulnerabilities.

Veritas Backup Flaws Found

Veritas backup software has significant flaws that should be patched immediately. Info and patches: *http://seer.support.veritas.com/ docs/273419.htm*

Phishers Could Exploit Recent Versions of Browsers

A flaw in a number of web browsers could be exploited to gather users' personal data through phishing attacks. Malicious pop-up Java Script windows appear in front of legitimate web sites, so people could be tricked into entering sensitive personal information. Affected browsers include recent versions of **Internet Explorer, IE for Mac, Safari, Mozilla and Mozilla Firefox.** Microsoft is investigating the report of this vulnerability and advises users not to trust pop-up windows that do not have lock icons or address bars, but will not issue an IE update to address the problem

Source: www.sans.org

Internet Humor

Rule #1 for Parents

Ava is the baby daughter of Marjan Keypour and Alireza Hashemi.

FEED ME AND I WILL LET YOU SLEEP

SWUG…
(Continued from page 4)

attendee, please) and return it to the address on the bottom of the form with your check. Or, visit the conference website (*www.swugconf.org*), click on Registration and click on Form.

The registry is open from 1 pm to 5:45 pm on Friday, August 5. If you are late in arriving (traffic can really be slow on Friday evening coming into San Diego), please join us for dinner and pick up your registration materials and Welcome Bag after dinner. Saturday morning registration is from 7 am until 8 am. Please join us for breakfast if you arrive after 8 am. You will also be able to register during the day since the registry remains open except for meals and presentations.

There will be vendor-sponsored meals and presentations; over 20 workshops (check the website occasionally for the updated workshop listing); and Vendor Faire on Saturday evening which gives you the opportunity to talk to the sponsoring vendors. Don't forget to bring your meeting calendar so you can sign up presenters.

The conference sponsors a Hospitality Suite where you can get to talk with members from other user groups, visit with vendors who stop by, etc. It is open Friday afternoon and after the presentation on Friday evening, between the last workshop on Saturday and the Vendor Faire, as well as after the Vendor Faire.

Bring a sweater — the workshop rooms can sometimes be a little chilly. Some of the most important things you can bring to the conference are your ideas, problems and/or successes to share during the workshops – users helping users is what user groups are all about.

For those guests / spouses who want to participate in outside activities, there will be a central meeting location where you can gather to walk to the Fashion Valley Shopping Center, take the trolley to The Gaslamp Quarter in Old Town San Diego, etc. There is also a day spa and salon at the resort, four swimming pools, and many areas where you can walk and enjoy the beautiful gardens.

Remember! A new Special Keyword Raffle begins this month. Look for the keyword in the newsletter or on our website at *www.orcopug.org.*

How to…

"Convert," then select your Source folder containing your music files. Select "Source Data Type" and set to WAV, then click on "Select all." Next select your Destination folder and select your "Destination Data Type" — setting it to MP3. Click on the Start button and it will now make MP3 files out of your selected WAV files.

After you are finished, Exit, go to your CD recording program and record your MP3 files on a CD as data files (do not make an audio CD). The MP3-Data CD will now play in a DVD Player or computer.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Letters…

tion, contact c*hairman@ raincoast.info*
• **January 2-5, 2006:** the APCUG Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. More details will follow at a later date.

Ed Van Meter
APCUG Region 11 Advisor
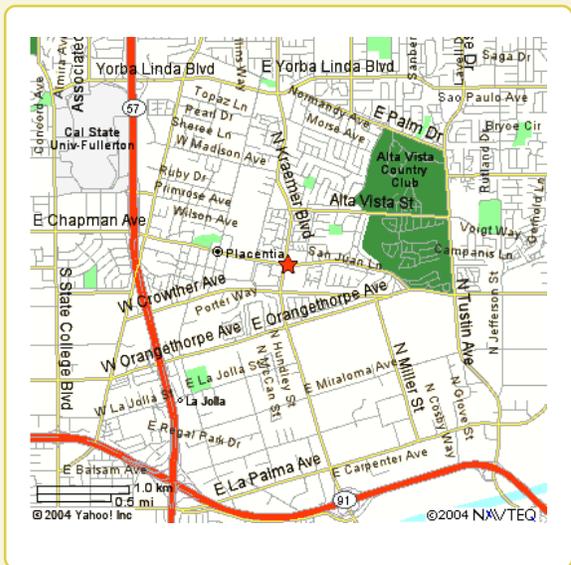**evanmeter@apcug.net**

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Newsletter Deadline July 23
for August Issue

The Public Is Welcome! Meetings Are FREE!

The Orange County IBM PC Users' Group regular meeting is scheduled for the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the **Placentia Library, 411 East Chapman Avenue. Placentia, California 92870, (714) 528-1906.** The library is 0.4 miles east of Kraemer Blvd. Call (714) 990-0580, for more information, or go to *www.orcopug.org.*

Planning meetings are held the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Downey Savings & Loan, one block east of Harbor at Bastanchury in Fullerton. All members are invited to attend the planning meetings!

Benefits for User Group Members

- **Product & "How To"demos**
- **Free raffles and magazines**
- **Help from other members**
- **Newsletter and web site**
- **Special offers & discounts**
- **Monthly meetings**
- **Affiliation with worldwide group**

User groups represent the spirit of the frontier, a community getting together to do things that no individual ought to have to do alone. The pioneers of the American west got together for barn raisings, cattle roundups, and the occasional party. The pioneers of new technology get together for installfests, new user training and support, and just plain fun. Being part of a user group is the best way to get more out of your computer, and lets you make friends while you're at it. — *Tim O'Reilly, President, O'Reilly & Associates*

Check out our award-winning web site!

LOOK WHAT'S THERE! | Online Review Form • Top 10 Viruses and Hoaxes PDF Searches • Personalized Map • Links to Tips and Antivirus Vendors • Discounts for Members

www.orcopug.org

Send a printed copy of this newsletter to a friend. Use this mailing sheet for the address. Staple newsletter together at top left corner with this last page facing out. Fold in half, so this page is visible. Tape ends together, stamp and mail.

6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, July 12

Photo Story 3

P.O. Box 716, Brea, CA 92822-0716
IBM PC Users' Group
Orange County
Computer users helping computer users