

Photoshop Elements 4.0

Mac versus Windows

By Philip Andrews

As an Photoshop Elements beta tester and an author with no less than three Elements titles gracing the shelves of bookstores worldwide, you think that I would be well informed when it comes to all matters concerning Photoshop's little brother. But the recent release of Photoshop Elements 4.0 for Macintosh even caught me by surprise.

'No Mac version for you!'

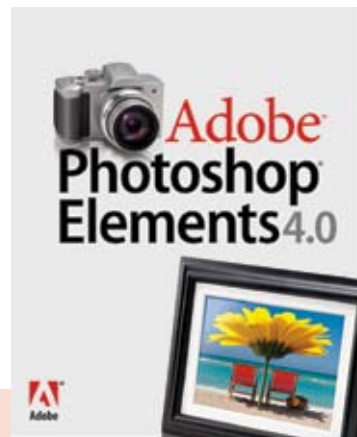
Until the appearance of 'Elements for Mac' Adobe had consistently denied that there would be an Apple version of the latest edition of their top selling entry level editing software. They sighted limited market share as the core reason for being reluctant to keep the Macintosh version of the program in-step with the Windows edition. This meant that for the first part of this year Mac users had to console themselves with using version 3.0 whilst Windows aficionados revelled in the latest features found only in Elements 4.0. No sooner had I completed the revision of my Elements titles (stating amongst other things that there would definitely not be a Macintosh release for version 4) and the 20 or so Elements authors worldwide received a curious note from Adobe announcing the imminent arrival of, you guessed it, Photoshop Elements 4.0 for Macintosh. It seems that the company had decided to release an Apple version after all.

Is there a difference?

It only took a few days after the announcement for my Inbox to start to fill with reader's questions about the differences between the Macintosh and Windows versions of the product. It seems that most Elements users assume that the products are an exact copy of each other, containing the same, tools, functions and features (after all this is the case with Photoshop). It comes as a bit of a surprise when they realise that this isn't the case. The Macintosh version contains most of the tools and many of the features of the Windows edition, but not all of them. For this reason, and the fact that Photoshop Elements users now make up roughly 25% of the digital editing software market, I thought we should spend a couple of pages in this issue detailing the similarities and differences between the two versions.

Editing is Editing is Editing is Editing is....

The core editing workspace is common to both Macintosh and Windows versions of the program. In fact, if you spend the majority of your time playing with your picture's pixels in this part of the program you will see very little difference between working on one platform or the other. This is where Photoshop Elements started. For those of you who have been with the program since version 1.0 and 2.0 you will know that in these earlier releases the



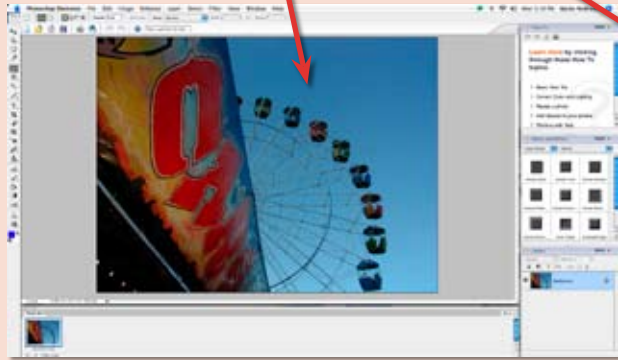
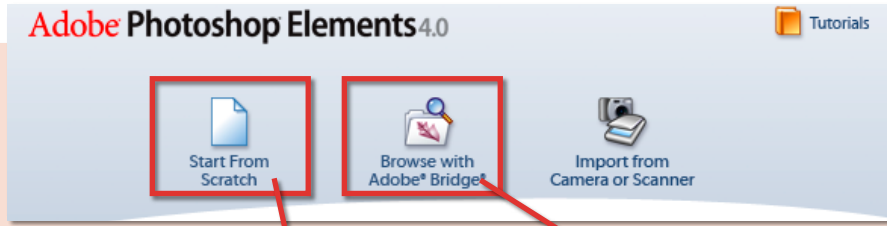
System requirements:

Windows:

- Intel® Pentium® III or 4 or Intel Centrino™ (or compatible) 800MHz processor
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional, Home Edition, or Media Center Edition 2005 with Service Pack 2
- 256MB of RAM (512MB recommended)
- 900MB of available hard-disk space
- Color monitor with 16-bit color video card
- 1,024x768 monitor resolution
- Microsoft DirectX 9 compatible display driver
- CD-ROM drive
- For handhelds: Requires Palm OS® 4.0, 4.1, or 5.0 and Palm Desktop 4.0 or 4.01

Macintosh:

- PowerPC® G3, G4, or G5 processor
- Mac OS X v.10.3 or 10.4
- 256MB of RAM
- 750MB of available hard-disk space
- 1,024x768 16-bit (XGA) display
- CD-ROM drive



Standard Editing workspace



Bridge for Elements workspace

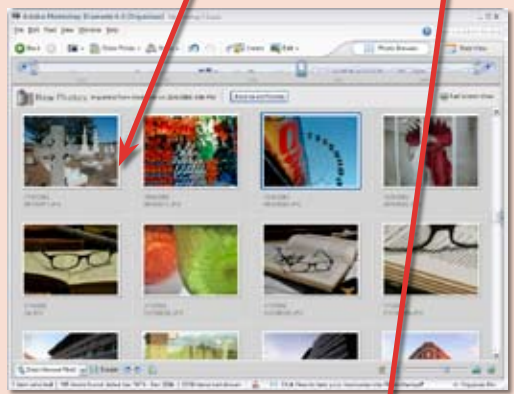
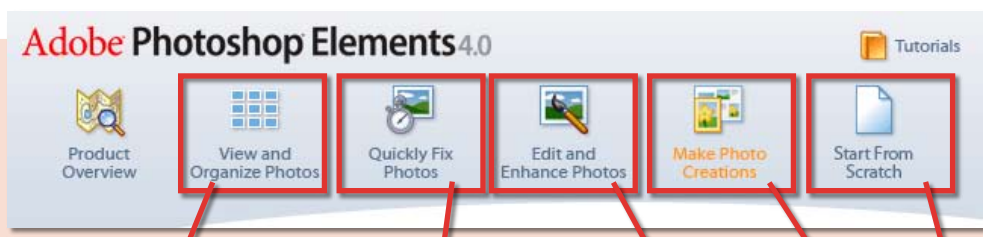
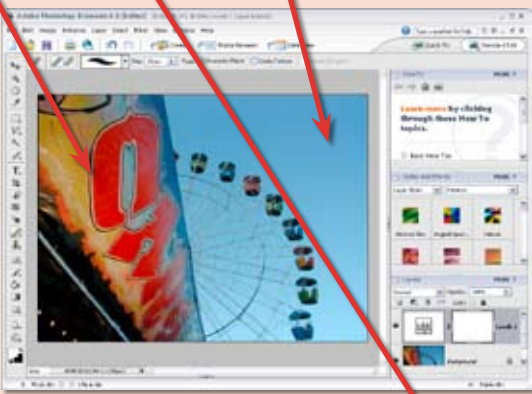
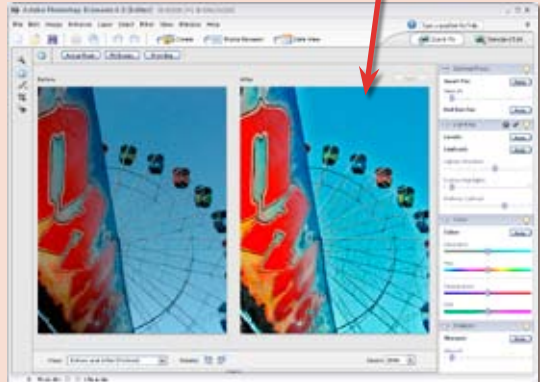


Photo Browser workspace



Standard Editing workspace



Quick Fix editing workspace



Photo Creations workspace

editor workspace **was** Elements. And the workspace and all the tools, features and menus that went along with it, were the same irrespective of which platform you were using.

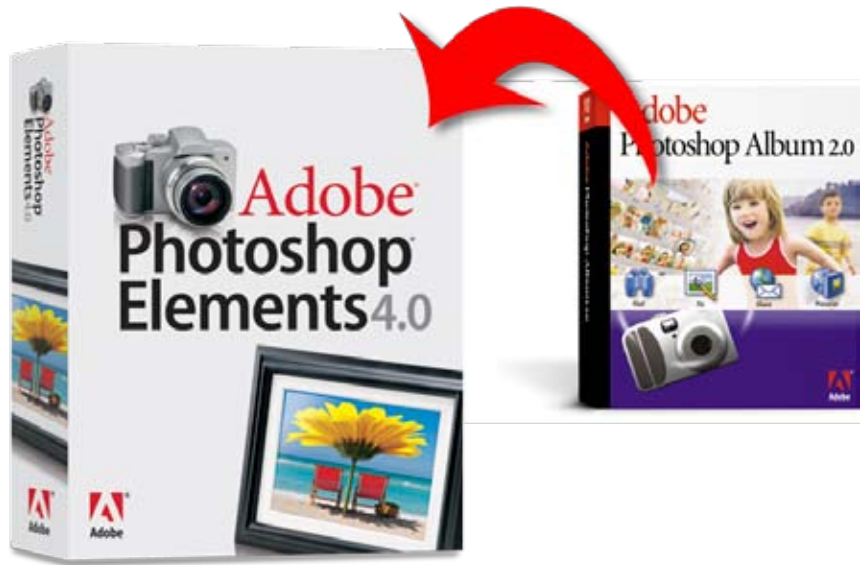
This common editing space remains today. For this reason, tips and techniques (and even books) that are written to be carried out within this part of the program are the same for Macintosh and Windows users.

Everything changes with 3.0

That said, the world for Elements users changed almost beyond recognition with the release of version 3.0 for Windows. It was at that time that the clever guys at Adobe married the picture management and organisation abilities of Photoshop Album with the Editing characteristics of existing Elements workspace.

This merger of technologies produced a brand new looking Photoshop Elements and started to broke the link between the Mac and Windows versions of the program.

Even though the editing workspace remains comparable in both packages through 3.0 and into 4.0, it was what was happening outside of this part of the program that pushed the two platform versions further apart.



Photoshop Elements version 3.0 and 4.0 for Windows combines the editing workspace found in earlier releases with the bulk of the photo management abilities from Photoshop Album. It is the extra features that resulted from this merger that forms the key difference between Mac and Windows versions of the product.

Windows workflow

When using the Windows version, opening the program provides a choice between general editing, quick editing, organising or project based activities. Most photographers choose to download and categorise their pictures in the Organiser space first before editing and enhancing the images with tools from either the Quick Fix or the Standard Editing workspaces. After producing the finished photos, groups of pictures are then passed onto the Photo Creations area where they can be used as part of a web gallery, hard bound book or slide show.

Macintosh workflow

In contrast, the Macintosh version of Photoshop Elements only contains the Standard and Quick Fix Editing workspaces and a simplified version of Photoshop's Bridge feature. The program doesn't include the Photo Creations workspace nor the advanced management and organizational features included in the Windows based Photo Browser.

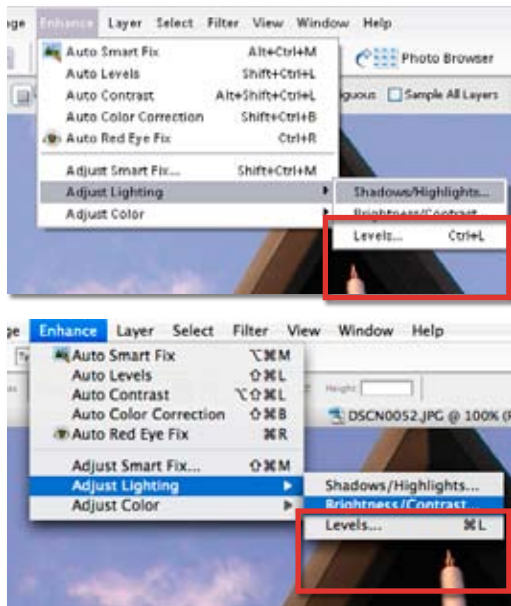
At first glance, it would seem that Macintosh users have been short changed in the upgrade process, but there appears to be a method behind these discrepancies. The main editing and enhancement power of Elements

is definitely located in the Quick Fix and Standard Editing spaces (the later being almost identical to Photoshop's interface and tool set). So Apple users do get the power of the program, but what about the 'bells and whistles' of the other work areas?

Photoshop Elements and iPhoto

Well Adobe's thinking is that most, if not all, Mac users have iPhoto on their machines. This great Apple produced program provides many of the picture management and project driven creation functions that the Photo Browser and Photo Creation workspaces do. It seems to me that rather than duplicate the abilities of this great program Adobe assumed that many Macintosh devotees would use iPhoto and Photoshop Elements side by side. Hence the editing tools and features inside the Macintosh version of Elements continues to keep in time with it's Windows twin but the responsibility of the managing the other areas in the digital photography process have been left to iPhoto.

So now that we are up to date with the history of the development of the program, let's get to the information that we all want to know, what new goodies are offered in Photoshop Elements 4.0 for Macintosh?



The major menu entries of the Standard Editor workspace are the same in both the Macintosh and Windows versions of Photoshop Elements 4.0. Top – Windows version. Bottom – Macintosh version.



Once you are inside the Standard Editor workspace the differences between Macintosh and Windows versions of the Photoshop Elements 4.0 are negligible. In this example you can see just how similar the tool sets are. On the left is the Windows toolbar and on the right the Macintosh version.

New for Elements 4.0 for Macintosh

The big ticket features are the Magic Selection Brush, Skin Tone Adjustment, Magic Extractor, and Auto Red Eye features.

The **Magic Selection Brush** provides a quick way to pick out parts of pictures to isolate the effects of editing and enhancing tasks.

Skin Tone Adjustment is a single dialogue feature that speeds up the task of achieving good skin tone colour in portraits.

The **Magic Extractor** removes the background from a photo leaving the foreground subject free to be used in montages or composite images. In this version of Elements red-eye removal has been made even easier. Now it is a simple one click process.

As well as an improved Crop tool, Elements 4.0 includes a new **Straighten tool** designed for simple reorientation of

crooked horizons or buildings.

More support is offered through out the program for **16 bit files** and a simplified, but no less powerful, version of **Adobe Camera Raw** is also included. The inclusion of export options for Adobe's new digital negative format (**DNG**) is an added benefit for raw shooters enabling non-camera based raw file archiving of their favourite images.

The file browser found in previous editions has been replaced with a simplified version of **Bridge**, the super browser that ships with Photoshop CS2. Beyond the standard thumbnail preview functions, Bridge for Elements supports sophisticated metadata, or EXIF data, searches. For the average user this means being able to locate files based on such metadata entries as the f-stop used to capture the photo, the time it was taken and even the camera the picture was shot with.

Windows and Macintosh Photoshop Elements 4.0 features side by side:

Features in common:

- Editor workspace
- File browser - Bridge/Photo Browser
- Skin tones (new)
- Magic selection brush (new)
- Magic extraction (new)
- Order prints on line (enhanced)
- Raw file conversions (enhanced)
- Share photos on line
- Straighten tool (new)
- Auto red eye collection (new)
- DNG export (new)
- Advanced noise reduction (enhanced)
- Crop tool (enhanced)
- Browse multiple file types (new)
- Find by meta data (new)
- Saved Searches (new)
- Photo captions (enhanced)

Windows only features:

- Photo Browser workspace
- Photo Creations workspace
- Advanced slide show editor
- Auto-red eye
- Face tagging
- View photos on tv
- Photo Book creation
- Wall Calendar creation
- Photo Greeting Card creation
- DVD/VCD creation
- Album Page creation
- E-mail sharing of photos
- Compare photos side by side
- Automated backup
- Direct links to Premier Elements
- Quick fix workspace

Features marked **(new)** make their appearance for the first time in version 4.0 of the program. Those with **(enhanced)** after the entry have been updated in this release.