

Microsoft Office X at the Monthly Meeting!

The Alaskan Apple User's Group

# COMMUNIQUE

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*How's this for Thinking Different?*



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## Asiva Photo 1.0

By Randy Brandon

**A**siva Photo...What is it? Well in a nutshell, it is a stand alone photo editing program.

But that description alone doesn't even come close to a real explanation of the program. First of all, I had not even heard, nor read anything about it until a friend ask me to review it.

The makers of Asiva Photo, call it a "Digital Image Enhancement System".

So, I began by loading it up, and pulling an image into it. I'll admit that at first, I was completely lost. Nothing seemed to work the way that it should. As with the majority of digital imaging programs, there are always several similarities in the look, feel, and functions of the various tools. Not so with Asiva Photo. So, I did what any newbie does..actually looked in the book for answers.

On launch, Asiva Photo presents you with a small vertical tool bar with 8 tools, and menu palette pull down windows named Operations and Sequences. There is nothing present in the Operations sequence window, so the user needs to choose a "New Operations" from the menu bar, and this step leads you through a smaller menu offering up all the basic functions available in Asiva Photo. The basic steps are: Correct Color, Apply Color, Shift Component, Gain Component, Remap Component, Matrix or Kernal, and Create Matte. I will explain these in more detail later, but they control all the major functions available in Asiva Photo.

The Asiva Photo program attempts to take a completely opposite approach to the standard ways of photo manipula-

tion used with most photo manipulation programs. It has the look and feel of a minimalist workspace. There are just few menus and tools that take up just a small portion of valuable screen space. This feature alone is a real plus.

I will make numerous references to Adobe Photoshop, as it is probably the most widely used, and best known photo manipulation program in use today.

A basic function used in most programs (Painter, Photoshop, etc.) is the selection tool. They can be a magic wands, or a lasso's, or a simple square, and their function is basically to define an area that will be changed in some manner; color correction or drop out, or masking, etc. And while this method is certainly effective, it is by no means the only way to do it. Asiva Photo uses its extensive 16 bit color tools to define (select) areas in photos that are of a specific color and hue without having to use the dancing ants border selections.

In the included tutorial, a photo of a flower provides the user with a perfect example of a selection problem. In Photoshop I would first select as much of the flower area as I could, then fine tune my selection edges, and proceed to making changes to the color, and density of that selection. I would also need to save that selection as an alpha mask if I wanted to use it again.

With Asiva Photo things are real different. I open the image, select "New Operation", and the "Correct Color" option. I then make a quick selection



of just part of the area that I wish to change. I then click on a "correct color" box in a separate palette, and bingo..the color is now anything I choose. No masking, no selections, no borders to clean up. WOW..very cool indeed, and potentially very quick, and accurate. There is also a "Correct Color Maps" palette for use in really fine tuning those color corrections to real perfection.

The next operation is aptly named "Apply Color". This operation allows the user the ability to brush on specific colors while also giving you the added option of a "blend" in color corrections on a sliding scale of transparency.

The next set of "Operations" are named the Shift, Gain, and Remap Components. These function to change the respective values (Hue/Saturation/Values) in an image. Or, in a direct quote from the manual: "To apply the Gain operator to a component, Asiva Photo multiplies the component value,

using the three Axis graph settings". And I thought that I use a bit too much "geek speak".

So, here goes with my attempt to give it to you in layman's terms. The Shift and Gain operations basically latch onto a very specific color hue, and only apply changes to that very specific color, while leaving everything else in the image alone. The Remap Components operation handles numerous colors, Hues, and Saturations all at the same time.

The Operations; Matrix or Kernel are specific operations designed to provide the program with Softening, sharpening, and special effects. These all work great, and the Effects operations provide some wonderful special effects with even more effects promised for future releases.

Last, but not least is the Create Matte operation. Can you guess what it does ?? Yes, it creates a matte (or mask, if you will) of various selected image parts. But since it does not create selections as such, you have to save this matte, and bring it into your other programs to utilize effectively. When I tried to do this, I was forced to bring it into Photoshop, convert it back to an 8 bit color mode from a 16 bit, and make sure that I dropped it in exact register with the original image that I wished to mask. I tried this operation with several images, and was never pleased with the results nor the effort that it required.

The Manual did make a reference to future versions possibly implementing a compositing feature, so perhaps this problem is already being addressed.

Another interesting feature of Asiva is that every Operation that is created, you can save for future images. You can

also turn various operations on and off to see the effects on different combinations.

The Tools palette contains only 8 tools. It has a standard arrow cursor, a "Pan Image" tool (a hand), and a zoom tool. The Color sampler tool (eyedropper) allows the user to extract various color characteristics from parts of an image. These are then used to adjust color hues, saturation, or luminance ranges.

The Asiva brush tool is completely different in the way that effects an image. When the user brushes on a stroke, Asiva creates a vector-based representation of that specific operation, which is saved and applied during final rendering. In a nutshell, the brush actually applies or removes localized Operations and effects. Working in the same manner as the brush tool are the Ellipse and the Rectangle, Apply/Remove tools. So mistakes are really not on the actual image itself, but on a mask of sorts that remains editable.

And bottom position on the Toolbar is the "Render" button, identical to the same button on every Operations panel. This is in essence a running preview button so you can see your effects while they are happening.

One very important feature in Asiva Photo is in its support for ColorSync profiles for both RGB, and CMYK files. Another great feature of Asiva Photo is that it is incredibly stable. This feature is, I am sure due in part to the fact that it installs NO pesky extensions, and hence does not fight with existing extensions.

Since Asiva Photo is obviously a very complex color tool, it would stand to reason that the manual would have a chapter on Color Space, Color Models,

and Digital Image representation in it. Well, it does, and it is a extremely dry subject covered in a wonderful way that does an excellent job of explaining exactly what Asiva Photo does to an image in terms of color.

Asiva Photo is an incredibly powerful program. In fact, It may be so complex, and powerful, that I am not sure that I truly "GET IT" yet myself. But I did explore it enough to know that it truly has some awesome capabilities. And I suspect that I did not yet have the time to ferret them all out.

My only real problem with this program is that it remains very difficult to accurately explain. Innovative software is often plagued by this very same thing. I suspect that this is the type of software that is meant more for POWER USERS of digital editing, and graphics, and not for the novice. But having said that, I would also note that even beginners could use this program with very little experience.

And in closing, I know that Asiva Photo will be waiting in my latest Kit-Bag of tricks for that perfect opportunity to make magic from my photographs!

I give ASIVA PHOTO a "\*\*\*\* (4) Moose" . WONDERFUL AND INNOVATIVE.

## SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

ASIVA PHOTO 1. will run on Power Macs(System 8.6 thru 9xx), and requires a minimum of 32 MB ram, and virtual memory must be off. The current version is also optimized for the G4 processor. Note: Version 1.02 for Mac OS X is now shipping.

Asiva Photo 1 :MSRP is \$378.00. Contact: Asiva Photo: 1-(512) 732-2886 Fax: 1(512) 732-2884