

Chameleon Plugin by AKVIS

Reviewed by Lee Alexander

What's a Plugin?

It is a piece of software that rides piggyback on an application. In other words, it is not functional by itself. Chameleon v.1.0 does only one job—blending in components of a structured photo. In action, it behaves like a super cloning tool, doing in seconds what could take hours of hand cloning/blending. I know because I tried it both ways. Okay, not being an Alex Lindsay or Bert Monroy (Photoshop gurus), what takes me hours could probably be done in minutes by men of such caliber.

Prerequisites

The hardware requirements are quite modest: 233 MHz Pentium II, 96 MB RAM, 5 MB HD space. As an adjunct to a photo editing program, it is a bit more demanding; the editor must be capable of working with layers. The three editors mentioned are: Photoshop versions 5 through CS, Jasc Paint Shop Pro versions 6.02 through 8, and Photoshop Elements. OS compatibility includes Windows 98 through XP.

My experiments with the software were done on a system composed of a 1.7 MHz Pentium 4, 512 MB RAM, 80GB HD divided into 6 partitions, and a 19" CRT monitor. The operating system is Windows XP Home SP1. By today's standards, this is a middling version of a home PC—nothing fancy.

The Trial—tale of a cat's tail

Visiting my sister, who cohabits and is tolerated by five cats and a dog, I took some snapshots with my recently acquired Canon S30 digital camera. Most of the animals were

blasé concerning my activity except for one Siamese who was “flash shy.” She decided it was safer under the welcome mat. Shadow, the black cat, was intrigued by the swishing tail protruding from the mat. I thought it would make a cute photo.

When looking at the images on my computer, I was surprised at the extremeness of the cat's red eye. Most of my photo editing programs do a decent job of “fixing red eye” in the case of humans—animal eyes are a different story. After hours of inept application of “effects,” I gave up and forgot about it. Then, in the course of time, I deleted the original and was left only with the botched *Figure 1*. If you think this is bad, you should see it in color. The cat's right eye is bright red (from the flash) the left is a blue blob—the result of my “touch-up.”

Figure 2 is a shot of the “sister” Siamese which has a markedly different coloring; now for the fun part. Using Adobe Photoshop Elements, I copied the face of the Sister-Cat, (*Figure 3*) pasted, scaled, and

positioned it on the Cat-Under-Mat (*Figure 4*).

At this point (in the past) I would have taken a break, fortified myself, and settled in for hours of clone-blending. Instead, I invoked the filter, AKVIS | Chameleon. In about 2 seconds I had the result in *Figure 5*.

The effect is much more dramatic in color. I did follow up with a little touch up—I lightened the face image on its own layer by using Element's Fill Flash with a setting of 6 (moderate).

Having sung the praises for the program, there are a few caveats. My previous experience with plugins has been with freeware and shareware. They were, in general, utilities that added features to enhance a program. Chameleon is a one-trick pony even though the trick is a doozy. And then there is the cost—at \$69 it is about 70% of the cost of the parent program, Elements. That said, it is subjective as to the program's value. Depending upon your skill level, time, and effort, it is a great jumping off point for creating “that which did not exist” or putting together a collage of favorite snaps. AKVIS can help you with the decision—download a 10-day free trial version of Chameleon at <http://akvis.com/en/chameleon/index.php>.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

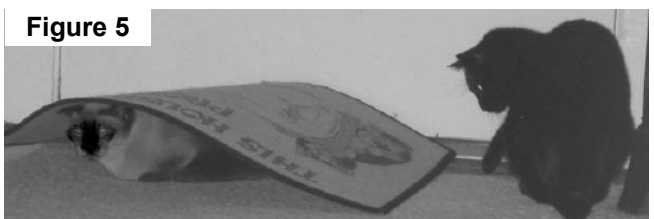


Figure 5