

AKVIS REFOCUS PROGRAM

A review by Russ Merritt

This company produces plug in and stand alone digital photography enhancement programs. This attracted my attention because there was a problem with a particular photograph that could use something to take the blur out. I have used sharpen tools in photo editing programs and found them OK, but tending to make the picture a little too harsh for my taste. So I decided to try this one as a stand alone application. As with their other products, plug-in installations are also available that put the AKVIS program into the menu structure of the parent photo editing program.

As a response to my request, AKVIS not only provided a downloadable application, but provided an online tutorial, a PDF user guide that could be used on line or downloaded (I opted to download), and a video tutorial. Before installing AKVIS Refocus, I took advantage of all three training materials. The PDF User Guide is a little over 40 pages. About the first 10 are used to tell you how to install and register the product. Necessary because you could be installing a stand alone product or a plug in, and you could be installing on a PC or a MacIntosh. The last 10 pages are pretty much used to describe other AKVIS applications. The pages in the middle tell you how to work things. The REFOCUS program supports BMP, JPG, PNG, TIFF and RAW graphic formats.

There are three different REFOCUS versions, each of which supports stand alone and plug in applications. They are Home, Home Deluxe and Business. The manual describes in detail the various differences of each version. The major difference between the Home and Home Deluxe versions is the capability of DEFOCUS.

Basically, the program allows you two methods to address the photograph. One: the entire photograph is subject to the REFOCUS effort. Two: you may isolate that portion of the program that is to be refocused and the rest of the photograph is not changed. With the Home Deluxe version, you can elect to have a

portion of the photograph blurred – put out of focus. This is an easy way to place specific emphasis on a particular part of the photograph.

Within the program you can use default setting, or adjust to your preferences or the particular need of the photograph, for the following: Under Focus: Manual Focusing, Sensitivity, Intensify; Under Blending: Darken, Lighten; With the Deluxe version, Defocus is also offered in the settings. The settings are easy to change and there is a default setting so that you can get back to where you started. You can also set these choices the way you want them and save them for future use.

After making the adjustments, you can now do a save as to let you rename the new project or, if you don't mind losing the picture you are working on, you can save it with the same name (the old photograph will be replaced with the revised one).

I found the application used what appears to be a nice way of applying the sharpening command. In my experience it is much more selective, and since you can control the way the sharpening is applied, it is more effective. Is it perfect – no, but until something better comes along, this will be another photo enhancement application in my tool chest.

EAST-TEC ERASER

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A Software Review by Herb Goldstein, Editor,

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There's no shortage of software that will permanently erase files, but if you simply want the very best there is, one that spares none of the bells and whistles, East-Tec Eraser leads the pack. It's for people that demand that their erasures, albeit a single file or an entire disk is erased in such a way as to be totally, completely, and unequivocally gone and unrecoverable by any means or entity known to man. In fact, it surpasses even top-secret military requirements.

East-Tec erasure is not only a leading permanent deleting utility, it offers an extremely useful associated bag of tricks you can employ at your choosing: