

Akvis SmartMask £84.50/\$120

Make the task of cutting out much simpler with this plug-in

Key features

- Three cutout modes
- Easy-to-use toolset
- Advanced cutout tools

Learn more...

• www.akvis.com

Available from...

• www.akvis.com

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You might also like...

Akvis Sketch £63.85

Sketch is available as both a plug-in and standalone app and will turn your photos into works of art in just a few clicks. A very cool way to add creative effects to your photography.



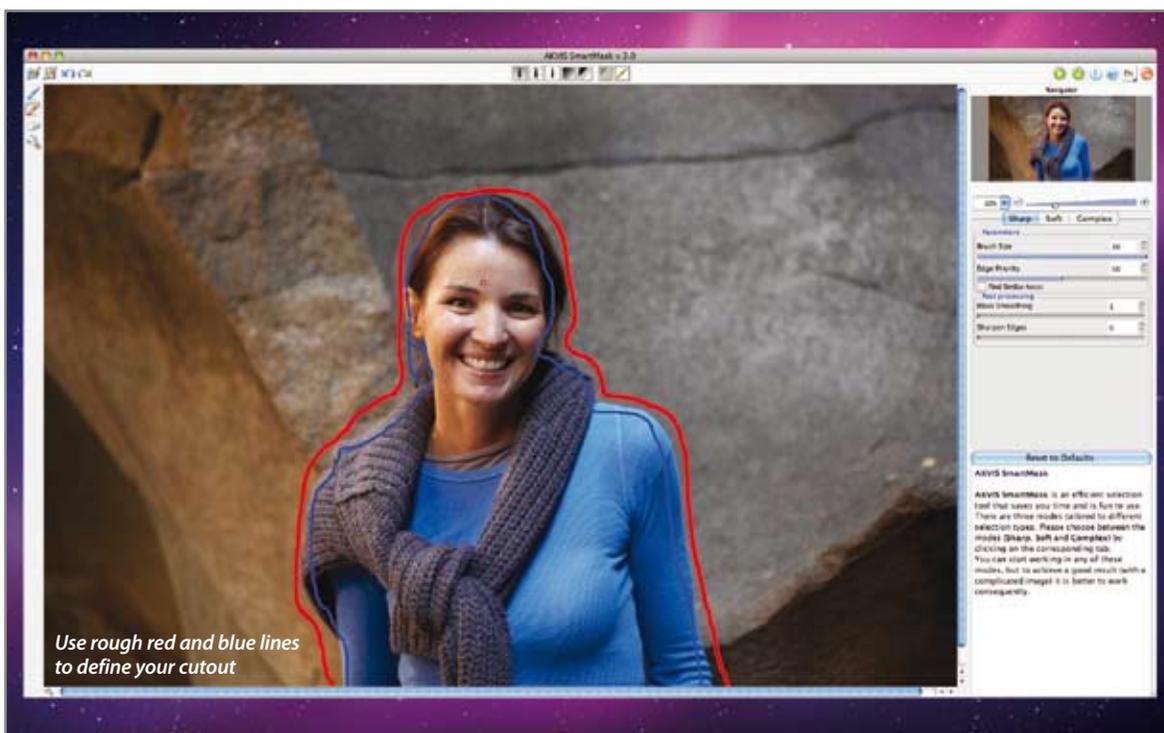
A lot of the software that Akvis makes is available as a standalone product as well as a Photoshop plug-in, which makes the products universally accessible. Unfortunately that's not so for SmartMask, which is a real shame. Despite this, if you do own Photoshop and have the need to cut people and objects out from images then you may be looking for a solution that can save you time and effort. Well, look no further. This plug-in is by no means perfect but it will, without question, save you some time once you get the hang of it.

Once you've loaded the image you wish to chop up in Photoshop and unlocked the layer, you can select SmartMask as a plug-in from the Filters list. The image will then be loaded in a new window where you can use the SmartMask tools. The premise is really simple – use one brush to select items to keep and another to select those to be lost. The idea is that

with two rough outlines offering the software an inclusive and exclusive path, it can detect all of the actual edges and make the selection very exact. It's a little hit and miss at times but the results can be startling. There is salvation for those hit and miss areas in the form of a Soft brush that you can use to detail where the edges meet and the software should work a little harder. With these extra lines drawn on tough areas, SmartMask will take a second look and improve the selection. Once you are happy you click a button to return to regular Photoshop with just the portion of the picture you wished to keep. This can then be added to any other picture you want as a separate layer.

SmartMask does have some advanced tools for those that wish to make an absolutely perfect cutout and these take some time to learn. Overall this is a plug-in that will only really suit those who do an awful lot of cutting out.

“Use one brush to select items to keep and another to select those to be lost”



Questions answered

Because we get to play with stuff before you do...

“Is this plug-in available for all versions of Photoshop?”

Yes. It will work on Power PC Macs and Intel Macs as well as all versions of Photoshop. Speeds will obviously vary according to the hardware and software you are running. We tested the plug-in on an Intel Mac using Photoshop CS2 through Rosetta and it worked perfectly.

“As this is a plug-in, how difficult is installation?”

It's really easy. You have to drop the loaded file into the plug-ins folder in Photoshop and the next time you load the software it will be available in the Filters menu.



Killer feature

Simplicity

You can make selections and cutouts in no time, once you've got the hang of the software.

Buy now?

Pros A simple solution to a tedious task, which could save you bags of time

Cons Limited by the fact that it is available only as a plug-in and not as a standalone app

