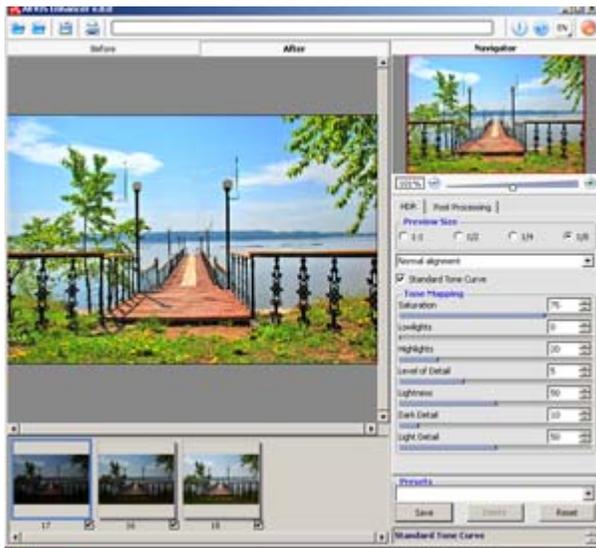


## AKVIS Enhancer

March 13, 2008. By Nataly Tikhonovich, MyphotoSoft



Another HDR producing software is **Akvis Enhancer**.

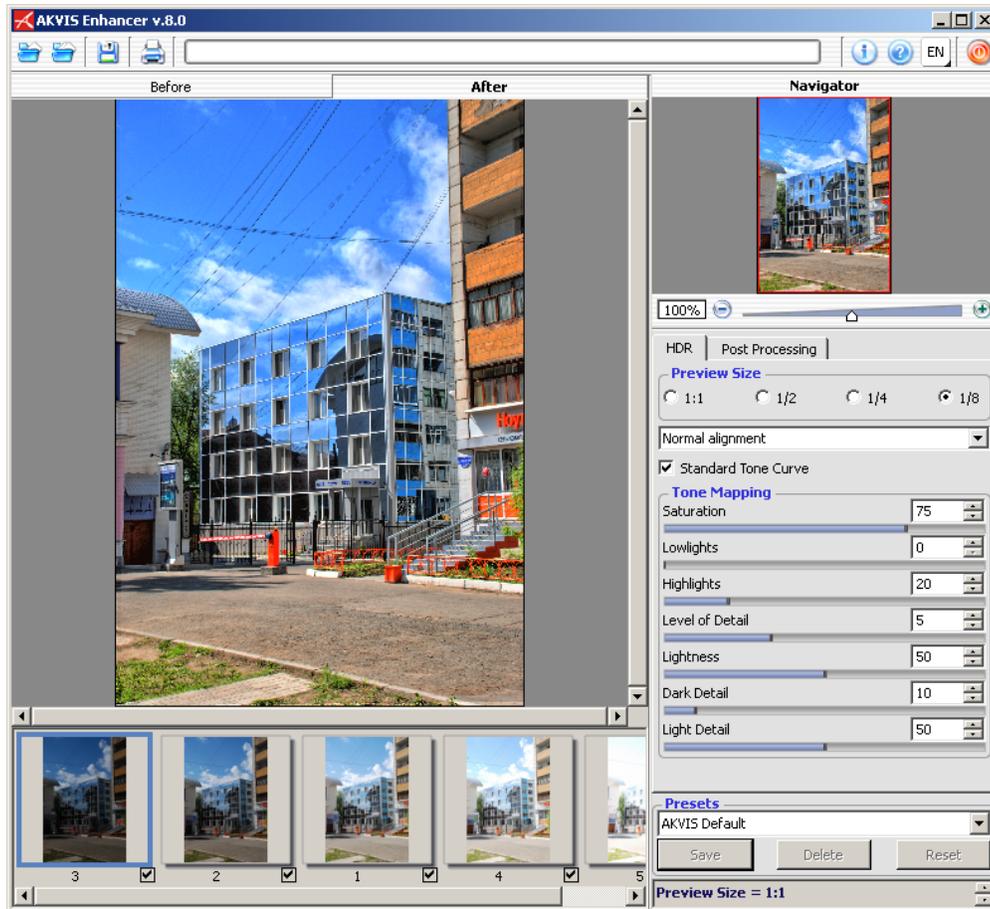
Enhancer works as a “one click”, or, in other words, fully automatic tone mapping tool. All you have to do with Enhancer is load images to the program and, may be, play with the settings afterwards. No intermediate hdr file, no manual alignment pains. Some color postprocessing after and you are done. A quick job.

Lets look at the workflow and the output quality though.

Enhancer has the usual Akvis program interface with a large preview space on the left, navigator and tools on the right panel with quick tips in the bottom.

To produce a tone-mapped hdr image you have to load the differently exposed images to the program (the load multiple images button is placed on the top panel).

The loaded images previews are displayed as a filmstrip at the bottom and the processed, tone-mapped hdr image appears in the main preview window. The alignment is done automatically. Enhancer takes exposure information from the image exif and can only ask for it if such information cannot be obtained from the image itself (Exposure Value dialog box allows entering the values manually).



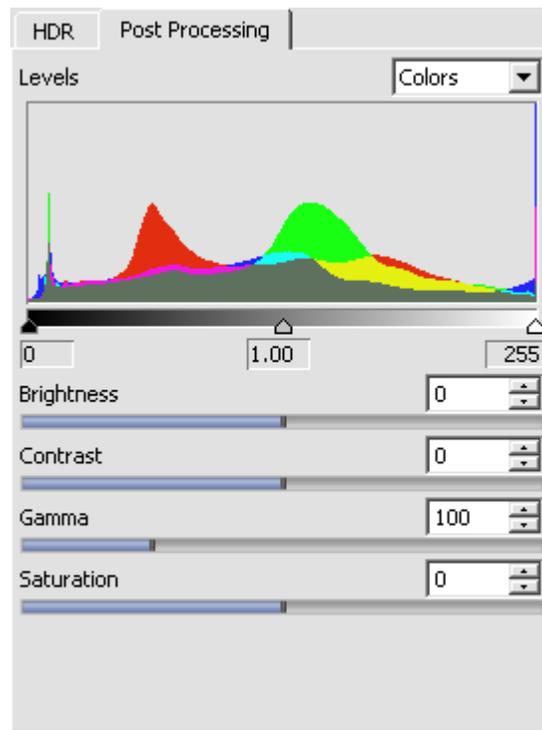
What are the options here? Of course, if the image satisfies you a hundred percent you will just save it to one of the allowed formats - jpg, tiff, png, or bmp. If not - there are still a few things to do about it. Right in the program window you can uncheck some of the source photos to exclude them from hdr production. The alignment can be of different degrees - from Normal to Advanced or it can be turned off altogether. The more complex and precise the alignment is, the longer it takes to reprocess the image.

With the images I run through the program no alignment flaws arose, even with those not aligned properly by other programs.

Tone-mapping itself is initially performed with default Akvis settings (The user can save and use later custom settings as well). They produce rather a good result with naturally looking colors and enough brightness. I can't say that tone-mapping with Enhancer produces any additional noise as it can be in some cases. The only thing Enhancer does not do anything about is the moving objects producing ghosting artifacts. In the image below you can clearly see two half transparent traces of clouds following the solid cloud. The human figures in the other image also have ghosts of themselves behind; the trees with branches and foliage waving in the wind look blurry, the hanging wires double or triple.



Tone-mapped images can be post processed as well. Here you are offered mainly color adjusting tools as brightness, Contrast, Saturation and Levels tool. The Levels tool can operate different color channels.



Apart from **HDR mode** there's **Enhancer mode** in the program. It detects detail in underexposed, overexposed and mid tone areas of a single photo. Practically, Enhancer uses same tone-mapping algorithms for both merged hdr and single ldr image. To say more, Enhancer (as the name of the program and the update log suggest) started from this enhancing function and HDR technology was added later on. The price for extracted detail is additional noise and even artifacts, though.



Enhancer can be used not only in standalone but also in a plug-in version with any kind of postprocessing accessible in the image editor.

Overall impression from Akvis Enhancer is a good one. The program is good for producing good and quick results from unproblematic source images. The minuses include no manual aligning or ghosting artifacts reduction options and inability of enhancer to work with raw images. Enhancer is easy to use and understand, some help is provided on the run, in the Tips little window, and more help, tutorials and Support can be found on the manufacturer site and forums.

Akvis Enhancer (Standalone and plug-in together) can be obtained at [akvis.com](http://akvis.com) site for \$99. Separately they are sold at \$69 for the Akvis Enhancer plug-in and \$89 for the standalone version. A 10 day trial period is offered.