

Reviews

Exposure X7

by L. Davenport

Exposure X7 is a photo editor that was designed for hobbyist and pro photographers who want to create artistic images from their photos. Exposure isn't a simplistic one-trick pony program. It is a full featured program that has many options and presets that you can use to adjust the look of your photos. Exposure comes as a standalone program and as a Lightroom or Photoshop plug-in.

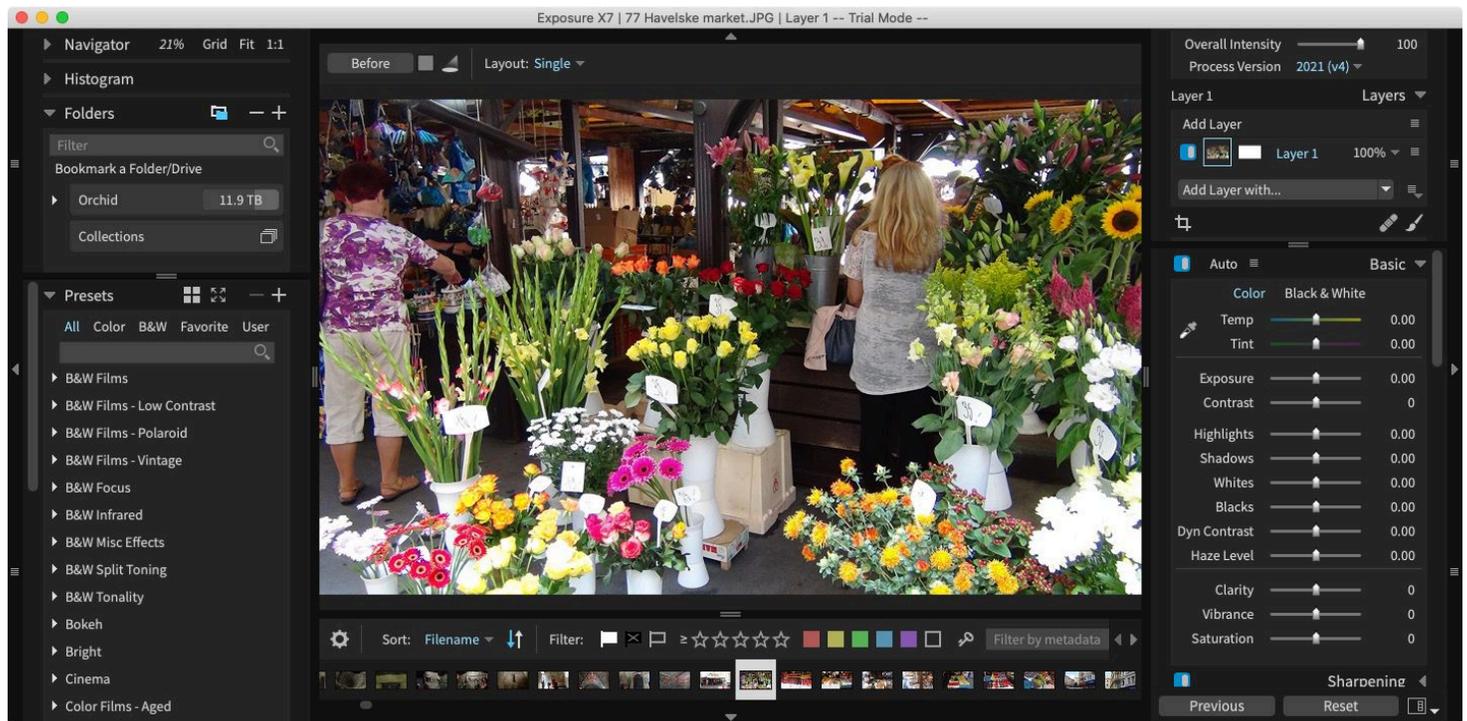


Figure 1. This is the Exposure X7 interface.

The interface

The Exposure window (Figure 1) is divided into several parts. The left side contains panels for the Navigator, Histogram, Folders, History, and Presets (pre-made photo adjustments). At the center is the photo viewing area which can toggle between a single image or the Grid view (thumbnails of all the photos in a folder or collection - Figure 4). Below that is the the Filmstrip (which lets you scroll through the photos in the current folder or collection). To the right top are the Intensity, Opacity, Layer and crop tools. Below that are all of the Parameters that you can use to manually adjust the look of your photo and the Metadata pane.

Presets

There are over [500 presets](#) to choose from. The presets are grouped into different categories so you can easily find the right look. These presets are film emulations that span the entire history of film photography, in addition to utility presets and modern looks. You'll find color and black and white films, focus effects, faded films, lo-fi looks, and more. Each preset can be fully customized using the parameter sliders in Exposure's editing panels.

A few of the presets are: Vintage look, Black & White, Subtle modern portrait films, Saturation boost for landscapes, Faded looks for a hazy dreamy effect, cross processing, daguerreotype, lo-fi, bokeh, B & W and colored infrared, autochrome, color fading, and hundreds more looks..

Once you have chosen a preset, you can make some refinements using the parameter sliders on the editing panels.

Previews

There are several ways that you can preview what your image would look like with a particular preset:



Figure 2. You are given the option to enter the “Audition” mode which lets you see your photo with up to six different Presets added to them. This way you can see at a glance which one you like best. BTW: In this example, I wanted to show you some of the different presets. In reality you would probably use it to see subtle differences like the thumbnail presets shown in Figure 4.

- Click on one of the presets to add it to your photo.
- When you select/open a photo, little thumbnail representations of your photo show up in the Presets list. For example, I opened a photo of a lady standing in a field. Immediately thumbnails of her photo showed up in the presets list with each preset applied to it (Figure 3). Thumbnails are small and it is hard to see the full effect. So you can move your cursor over each small thumbnail and the large preview image (in the center of the Exposure window) updates so you can see the effect at full size. This is a quick way to find the preset that has the effect that you are looking for.
- Go into the Audition mode which lets you see your photo with up to six different Presets added to them. This way you can see at a glance which one you like best (Figure 2). BTW: Any adjustments to the parameters will be applied to all of the Audition photos.
BTW: You can also use the (horizontal or vertical) Split screen option to compare the before and after photo.

Organizing your photos

- **Bookmarks:** Exposure has a Catalog free workflow. This means it works off of your Finder folders. Exposure has a Bookmark feature that lets you add any folder to Exposure’s Folder panel. Example: Bring a photo into Exposure and a Bookmark of the hard drive and folder(s) that it resides in, shows up in Exposure’s “Folders” section to the left of the main window (upper left corner of Figures 1 & 4). Clicking on this “Bookmark” instantly shows you all of the photos that are contained in the folder, hard drive, etc.
- **Collections:** Collections in Exposure are virtual folders that you can use to sort your photos according to any criteria that you set. You can add an image to as many collections as you want since you aren’t duplicating photos. So you won’t be filling up your hard drive with multiple copies. The result is a fast and flexible way of organizing your images for different purposes.

You can create as many collections as you want plus you can add sub-collections to a collection. For example: you can create a Travel collection and then create sub-collections for each country or town that you traveled to, etc.

You can even create Smart Collections that will automatically sort your photos using keywords, ratings, and colors.

Once you have created your collections, you can use cloud storage to sync your collections across multiple computers or share them with others.

BTW: There is an option to migrate a Lightroom Library into Exposure. Exposure can retain your keywords, flags and color labels, copyright, caption and naming metadata along with some of your basic adjustments, like cropping and rotating. You can find more details about exactly which



Figure 3 These are just a few of the 500 presets that you can apply to your photos.

Silicon Summit

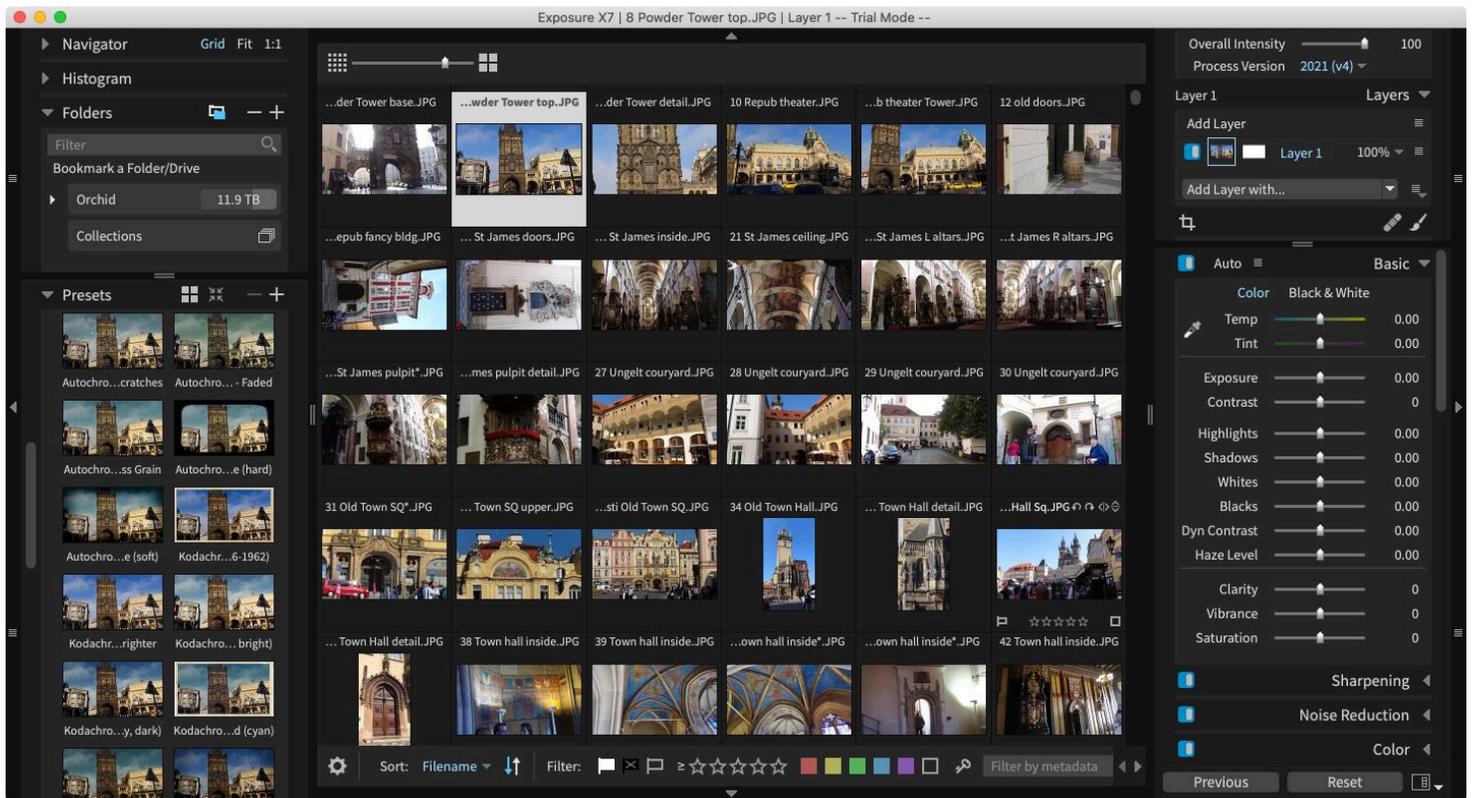


Figure 4. The Exposure view can be changed from single view to Grid view. This lets you scan through your folders to find your desired image. You can also add stars, flags, and colored boxes to your photos to be used for sorting purposes. This sorting information is added to the photo's Metadata.

information is migrated on the [Exposure website](#).

Nondestructive Editing

Exposure is a non-destructive editor so you don't have to worry about ruining your original photo.

No saving needs to be done. All of the changes for a given photo is saved in a very small "Sidecar" document (which is saved in the same folder as the original). This tripped me up at first when I wanted to move from one edited photo to another. I was looking for the save menu item, but it wasn't there. So I clicked on another photo and started working on it. I was curious, so I went back to the first photo and all of the changes were still there. All of your changes become permanent only when you export a photo.

Tools

Exposure has a "Spot Heal" tool and a "Brush" tool. These can be used to quickly retouch your photos. There are Transform tools that adjust the vertical and horizontal keystone plus there are rotation, scale, aspect, and offset tools that you can use to correct a photo's perspective. You can adjust shadows, highlights, and contrast or watermark photos when exporting or printing. There is a wide variety of Overlays which lets you add all sorts of light effects (Figure 5) and Textures to your photos.

There are too many tools for me to cover in this review. I suggest you go to Exposure's "[Features](#)" web page to see a more comprehensive list.

LUTs

FYI: A LUT is a file that changes the colors in your image to simulate different looks used in films, etc. LUTs are freely available on the Internet and from other photo and video apps, making it easy to choose from a variety of styles.

Exposure can read LUT files that use the .cube format. The free LUTs that are posted on the Internet often use this format.

External Editors:

Exposure was designed to modify an existing photo. It was not designed as an art program where you can add lines, circles, make other changes. If you need this capability, you need to use another art program. That's

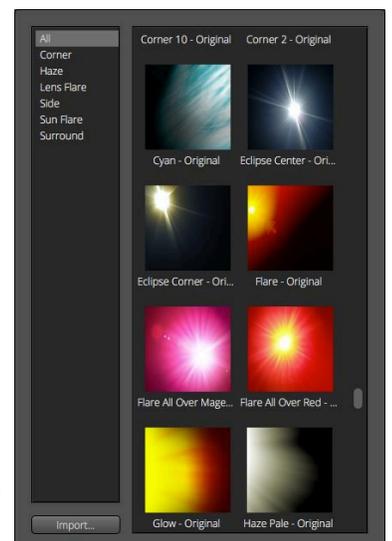


Figure 5. The Overlays panel lets you add all sorts of light effects and Textures to your photos.

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were Exposure's External Editor option comes in very handy. Without leaving Exposure, you can send your photo to another art program, do your modifying, etc. and send it right back. -- Sweet!

I tested this by first adding Photoshop, Acorn, and Pixelmator to Exposure's External Editor list in the preferences. Then I sent a photo to my Acorn program, drew a squiggly line, saved it and quit Acorn. Sure enough, the squiggly line showed up in the original photo within Exposure. I repeated this step with Photoshop and Pixelmator and had the same results both times.

File Formats

- **Import:** Exposure supports a variety of file types such as: RAW, TIFF, JPEG, DNG and PSD (though PSD files must be saved in Photoshop with the "Maximum PSD and PSB Compatibility" option turned on. BTW: PSD files come in as composites with no layers).
- **Export:** Your exported photos can be saved in the JPEG, TIFF, and PSD file formats.

Exposure X7's New Features

- Exposure X7's new masking tool makes it easy to separate a subject from the background (Figure 6). Photographers can draw a rough border in just a few clicks to indicate the selected area and Exposure's intelligent algorithm creates a precise mask. The selected area can be refined at any time to adjust the mask.
- There are new workspaces for organizing the panels needed for a particular task. This enables users to more easily focus on a specific step in their workflow. Included in Exposure are built-in layouts for culling, editing, and retouching, and photographers can easily create new workspaces customized for their needs. Additionally, Exposure adds quick navigation popovers to easily switch between workspaces or jump to other panels in this workspace.
- The crop and transform functions are unified into a single easy-to-use panel. This streamlined interface enables easier modifications for simple crops as well as detailed transform adjustments. Additionally, new composition guides have been added - golden ratio, golden spiral, golden triangle, and diagonal.
- Defective pixel removal is now available for raw photos, to automatically detect and remove single-pixel artifacts caused by defects in a camera sensor. Photographers can adjust the removal strength to achieve the best results.
- More faithful color reproduction when using custom DCP color profiles
- Improved color fidelity with DNG files
- Fine texture noise can be added to recover detail with aggressive noise reduction.

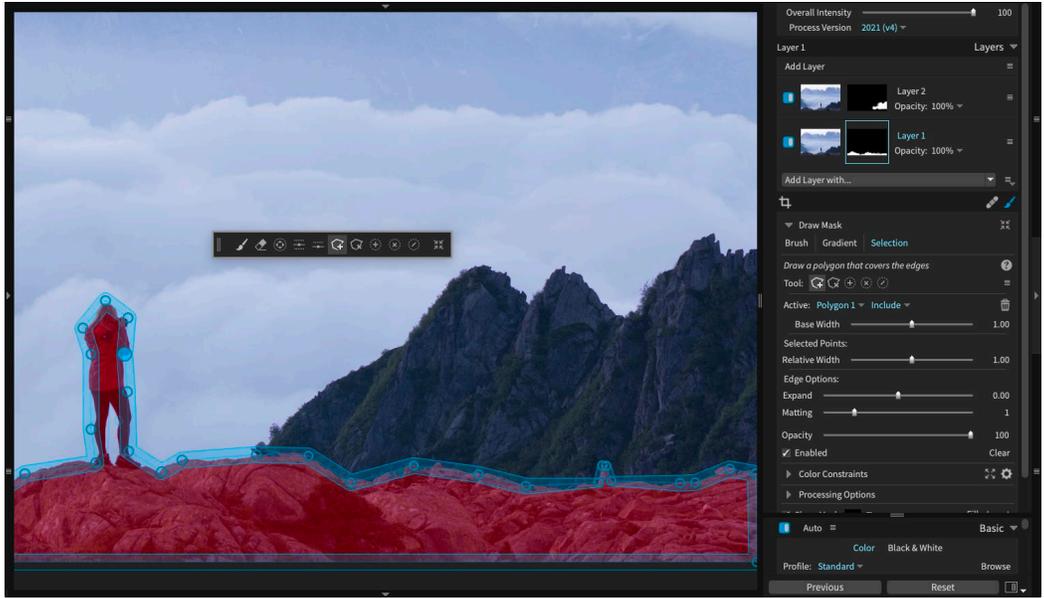


Figure 6. Exposure X7's new masking tool makes it easy to separate a subject from the background.

The Skinny

Evaluation: At first look Exposure may seem overwhelming - so many options and presets. But once you work your way through the Exposure [video tutorials](#), Exposure seemed less intimidating. I am quite impressed with all of the adjustments that you can make to your photos. Exposure's Performance seem good - I didn't notice any lagging. I also like the ability to send my photos to external editors for adjustments that aren't available from within Exposure.

Requires: **Exposure program:** OS 10.13 or higher; An Intel Core 2 processor, 8GB RAM minimum, 16GB recommended, For GPU support, a recent (2015 or later) OpenCL compatible GPU with 2GB RAM is recommended

Exposure plug-in: Adobe Photoshop CS6, Adobe Photoshop CC 2015 or newer - Adobe Lightroom 6 or Adobe Lightroom Classic CC

Company: [Exposure Software](#)

Price: \$129

[Available Trial Copy](#)