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By:

[Acrylic, there's a long way to the top if you wanna Photoshop](#)

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The boom of digital imaging triggered by the increasing sales of digital cameras has led to a high demand of graphics editing programs. From simple viewers and organizers to Photoshop clones, the market is full now of programs that are trying to make photo editing a simpler and faster to accomplish task. Microsoft has decided that it's time to get involved in this domain and has launched Acrylic, a program that is aimed at being a replacement for Adobe Photoshop. But from theory to practice there is a long way, and the beta version which can be downloaded from Microsoft's site comes only to confirm this. Installing the 80MB kit went along without any incidents, although many interface elements give the impression of an alfa version rather than beta (unfinished buttons, missing letters etc)After the install in complete, I had to search the target folder because the shortcut to e4.exe was nowhere to be found, and after launching the file I found myself in front of an interface that bears striking resemblances to Photoshop 4.0 or PaintShop Pro.The interface is composed of four windows: Toolbox, Paint Style, Layer List and Hints which have well defined purposes. The first unpleasant surprise Acrylic that popped up was when I chose New from the file tab. Acrylic presented me with a blank document without asking me details on dimension, background, color space or resolution. The second unpleasant surprise showed up when I selected Save. In the Save as window I was invited to save in a new format: .XPR, the JPG, .TIFF or .BMP formats being unavailable. Classic formats are only available through Export To Image Format and you can only choose: .JPEG, .TIFF, .BMP, .PSD, .GIF and .PNG. And the list of unpleasant surprises continued: difficult menus placed in the strangest locations, the absence of the preview option for functions like Brightness and Contrast or for filters and so on. I think the developers wanted to copy functions from Adobe Phostoshop and Illustrator, and maintain in the same time the impression of originality. Unfortunately, they've failed. What's even more disappointing is that the program is slow and certain operations, such as applying a simple Inner Bevel effect took approximately 7 seconds more than Photoshop 4.0. In conclusion, Acrylic dreams of being a replacement for Adobe Photoshop, but it will take another 5 or 6 beta versions to achieve this, because the current version can't even be considered alfa.