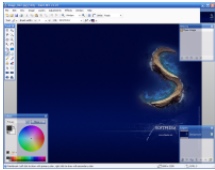


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By: Ionut Ilascu, Editor, Software Reviews



[MS Paint's Heftier Brother](#)

Edit your pictures by yourself

Image editing is a tough job if you do not have the appropriate tools. However, developers started to create a myriad of softwares that can accomplish most of the Photoshop results. Considering the features CS3 is incorporating (especially the Extended version) I gather one would need about 50 different applications to cover a small part of the Photoshop capabilities. Anyway, for those that are seeking great results at minimum costs there are plenty of possibilities on the market and Photoshop is not one of them (it has an outrageous price for those that lack the knowledge and imagination to use it). But for home use the solutions are lighter, smaller and more accessible. Paint Dot Net is one way to edit your pictures with a bit of professional touch. It is nothing like Photoshop but with a little effort the results can be fantastic. The application is a much more improved version of MS Paint and the most of the modern instruments are available. If you think the suite of effects is thin you have not discovered the Paint Dot Net community that provides more effects then you can handle. The interface is almost as slick as all the other Microsoft products, but there isn't the extravagant graphic features available in the 100% Microsoft developed softwares. But this is not at all a baddie of the application. Although originally it was created as a free replacement for MS Paint delivered in Windows OS package, the program grew into a very easy to handle tool for image editing. Among the latest features added to the software there is the multiple document interface that allows you open as many pictures as you want and work with all of them at once. A thumbnail for each image is displayed in the top right corner of the application window. Toggling between the pictures from the keyboard can be done by using the Ctrl+TAB or Ctrl+Shift+TAB shortcuts, just like in a web browser. The gradient tool is also greatly improved and now it provides the means to apply a transparency fade over the image. Very easy to use, you can modify the way the gradient is applied by moving the two nubs present in the image. Thus direction can be modified according to users' wish. The effects have also grown in number and the latest additions are Clouds, Outline (great effect, it empties the elements of the image of the color and only the contour that defines them remains), Median and Unfocus. The names give more then a hint on what they do. Additionally, the great number of plugins provided by the Paint.NET community brings you a myriad of effects just waiting to be embedded in the application. Adding them is just a simple matter of copying the DLL file in the Effects directory of the software's installation folder. Plugins are not limited to adding new effects, but also cover lots of functionality areas, like loading and saving Photoshop files, RAW camera images, DDS files or filters. Some of the plugins are adapted from different other image editing softwares like Photoshop or Corel, but they add a big plus of functionality to the software. Working with layers permits much more flexibility and the user can duplicate them, add a new one, merge the layers, flip it horizontally/vertically or import from a file. The properties of a layer include name, blending mode (14 available), and opacity adjusting. Each of the layers available in an image can have different properties. History tool lets you see all the modifications made to the working picture. This tool also has unlimited undo capabilities so no matter how much back you want to rewind it is just a problem of selecting the step back you want to return to. The Adjustments menu of the software lets the user play with the picture by applying auto-level, fiddle with the brightness/contrast, invert the colors of the image, set the hue and saturation of the colors or view the histogram of the image and adjust the levels manually. Curves option displays the transfer map and lets the user set the luminosity or RGB of the picture. All the modifications can be instantly previewed so that you can adjust the image in real time. The rendering of the picture is made very fast and you will not have to wait too

much. **The Good** Very good application for editing your images. For small jobs that do not require professional tools it is excellent. The plugin support and the suite of additional features that can be embedded with the help of the Paint.NET community makes it very flexible. **The Bad** would like to see more consistent improvements of the software. However, the software's development is made with small steps, but steady. **The Truth** It is a very good application for small image editing jobs like adding effects or adjusting the picture's luminosity and colors. The layering capabilities can provide great results with little effort. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*