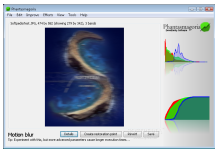


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Phantasmagoria

By: Giorgiana Bursuc, Windows Editor

Imagination Is the Only Limit

Add a professional touch to your photos

If you give a picture to a group of people and you ask them to adjust its appearance, you will never get the same results from all of them, not even the same effects. Have you ever wondered why that comes to happen? One reason for this situation would be that every person would surely use a different tool - after all, the offer is varied and everyone is free to choose the software they are most comfortable with. Another reason why people apply differentiated corrections is because each simply has a personal view of the same object. As an old saying goes, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so each person will most probably find something else to highlight in the already mentioned picture. One of the tools that aim at meeting the editing needs of many people is Phantasmagoria, a very promising software, at least when it comes to its name. In order to test its functionality, you will first need to make sure you have the latest version of [Java Runtime Environment](#), otherwise the application can't be installed. First and foremost, never expect an efficient photo-editing software to really be easy-to-use, no matter what its producers claim. Anything that is indeed worthwhile will require some effort on your side, and Phantasmagoria will prove to be worthy of your time. I'll explain it step by step. After launching, you will be welcomed by a friendly message (personalized for every user since it uses the computer's name to address you) and you will need to choose one of the four actions available: open an image, get a screenshot, get text or capture camera. Except for the text editing, all the options are somewhat similar, in the sense that they all imply that you have a picture to which you will apply corrections. The opening an image option is clear, whereas getting a screenshot might need some details. Phantasmagoria offers you the possibility to **capture your desktop** and all the active windows with just one mouse click - you simply need to arrange all the items on your desktop, press a button, then you will be notified when your snapshot has been taken and you are free to adjust it as you wish. **Getting text** is an unusual feature for a photo editor, but it is clearly a very inspired addition. You will be able to create spectacular effects that you can later integrate in blogs or personal projects and, unlike the regular text editors, the results will really look professional - not to mention that they won't even require too much work. You can customize just about everything, from selecting the font type, size and color, to using an outline, shadow or reflections. While we're still talking about unusual functions for a photo editor, let's not forget that Phantasmagoria also allows you to **capture your webcam** and adjust the grabbed image. This feature will most likely be grayed out when you install the software for the first time, but you will eventually realize that it's not your camera that it's broken, nor your computer, but that you simply need to install [Java Media Framework](#). After that, everything will run smoothly and you can start twisting and distorting your captured frames. This is the moment when I need to elaborate on the multitude of effects you can apply when it comes to your images. The available effects are divided within five distinct categories, each with its sub-options. For instance, if you want to apply **color adjustments** to your images, you can pick one of the following: RGB thresholding, full thresholding, auto-noir, noir, hue restriction, or the classical black & white and sepia. If you want to spice things up a little, you can always choose to **blur and sharpen** your picture by applying median or mean blurring, high-boost sharpening, bump filter, motion blur or lens blur. Moving on to the truly creative side within you (don't repress it any longer, unleash it!), you can go for one of the **distortion and warping** effects (mirror, glass message, kaleidoscope, marble, pinch, fisheye, twirl). If you still need to add just a little more "sparkle" to your graphic creations, try one (or several) of these **artistic** effects: cartoon, postmodern, blackboard, neon ghosts, sketch, charcoal or pixelate. However, I

need to warn you that it is almost crucial to closely analyze the subject of your picture before applying one of these effects, otherwise, instead of a masterpiece, you will get a fiasco (a fun one, nevertheless, but you'll need to recreate everything again). Furthermore, Phantasmagoria offers you the possibility to create several types of **textures** (brushed metal, underwater caustics, cellular, check, solid color, wood, and plasma) that you can seamlessly integrate within your images to obtain unbelievably realistic photographs. As a matter of fact, Phantasmagoria will help you take your images to a whole new dimension so even you will start wondering if it was really you who achieved such an impressive feat. **The Good**For a photo editor, Phantasmagoria is great. It allows you to optimize your photos and to personalize them to high extents, but that's not all. Customize text messages, edit screenshots and adjust webcam captures - just say the word, and you have it. **The Bad**To be honest, I was a little bit disappointed when I realized that the spotlight could not be customized, as it would have been great if the users could choose the color, the angle and the intensity of the light, depending on the image element they wish to emphasize. The Help file is quite "unhelpful," as it encourages you to use the try-and-error method, meaning you should experiment with the settings until you come up with the ideal combination. Even if this is a fun process, I believe that all the features of Phantasmagoria could be put to better use with a little guidance. **The Truth**All in all, Phantasmagoria will surprise you with its functionality and multiple effects, and your buddies will be even more surprised with the output images you will come up with. On the other hand, even though the histograms can seem somehow useless, keep in mind that they were probably added for the experienced users who require more from an editing software than just invert colors or flip. These being said, you will once again reach the conclusion that, indeed, the best things in life are free (for non-commercial use, this time). *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*