Microsoft Digital Image Suite 10
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OCTOBER 26, 2004

CHANCES are when it comes to image editing and archiving software your experience comes either from the disc supplied with your digital camera (which you may or may not have used or even installed) or, if you're keen, a high-end package such as Adobe's Photoshop.

Granted, few of us would regularly need to use a powerful package such as Photoshop, but just about all of us could do with some help in organising, archiving and editing our shots.

Version 10 of Microsoft's Digital Image Suite bridges the gaps between low-end and professional imaging software for editing, storing and printing images.

It basically consolidates previous Microsoft imaging products into two programs covering the full image management cycle – Digital Image Library 10 for organising your collection, and Image Pro 10 for editing, restoring and cleaning your photos.

Image Library 10 works on top of the My Pictures folder in your My Documents file. At first glance it may seem little more than a enhancement of My Pictures, but it offers some subtle, yet powerful, controls that provide strong incentive for even shoot-file-forget snappers to bring some order to their image store.

As well as sorting your pictures away in their usual folders, Image Library also lets you organise them through the use of keywords, star ratings and flags. It also lets you create innovative slide shows of your images incorporating music, narration, pans and zooms.

The real meat of Digital Image Suite 10, however, is in Image Pro, which offers many of the features of the more professional packages such as Photoshop, but it's hard to imagine an image editing program that is just so easy to use for the novice while offering truly advanced features to please the more skilled photo editor.
To launch into the program you simply highlight an image or set of images in your library, then click on the edit button on the toolbar.

The chosen picture(s) will be immediately thrown into Image Pro's Stack menu, the main image is placed in a generous display window and all options are displayed in the menu bar above.

Simple touch-ups for the novice user couldn't be easier – a single click on options such as exposure, colour, contrast and levels will automatically provide image correction.

For those who want a little more control the tools are available to manipulate these further.

One of the clunkier aspects of the program, however, is the task plane that pops up when choosing most tools.

While it provides a simple guide to what you have to do to perform each function, you must click on a poorly placed and easily overlooked Done button to end that task and move on to another.

Of all the advanced tools, special mention should be made of two: Smart Erase – a feature that lets you seamlessly remove unwanted and annoying objects from your photos – signs, litter, ex-spouses etc. It's not always perfect, but the results is often truly impressive. There's also a gridded cropping tool that helps you accurately crop your images into shapes suitable for printing.

For someone more familiar with Photoshop, some of the terminology may be confusing, but there is no disputing that this program is much easier to use.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Requirements:** Windows 98, ME, 2000, XP  
**Web:** www.microsoft.com  
**PRICE:** $189.95

**VERDICT**

**PROS:** One-click touch-ups make photo editing about as simple as it gets. Comes with some advanced features such as smart erase.

**CONS:** Needs a new processor to run at satisfactory speed. Confirmation button placement for common tasks is annoying and easily overlooked.

**Rating:** 4/5