



The Best Consumer Photo Editor Gets Even Better



Adobe Photoshop's little brother, Photoshop Elements, just keeps getting stronger, smarter, and more helpful. It does a terrific job of making advanced Photoshop effects accessible to non-professionals, while still offering sophisticated tools. Much of Photoshop's magic has trickled down to Elements, including content-aware manipulations, smart object selection, and custom eye-popping filter effects. Even common processes such as cropping and black-and-white editing get ease-of-use boosts in version 13. Facebook-specific tools give users

**Adobe
Photoshop
Elements 13**

\$99.99



a leg up on sharing to that most popular of targets. Not messing too radically with a winning formula while adding ease to powerful image manipulation keeps Photoshop Elements on top of the enthusiast photo editing software heap.

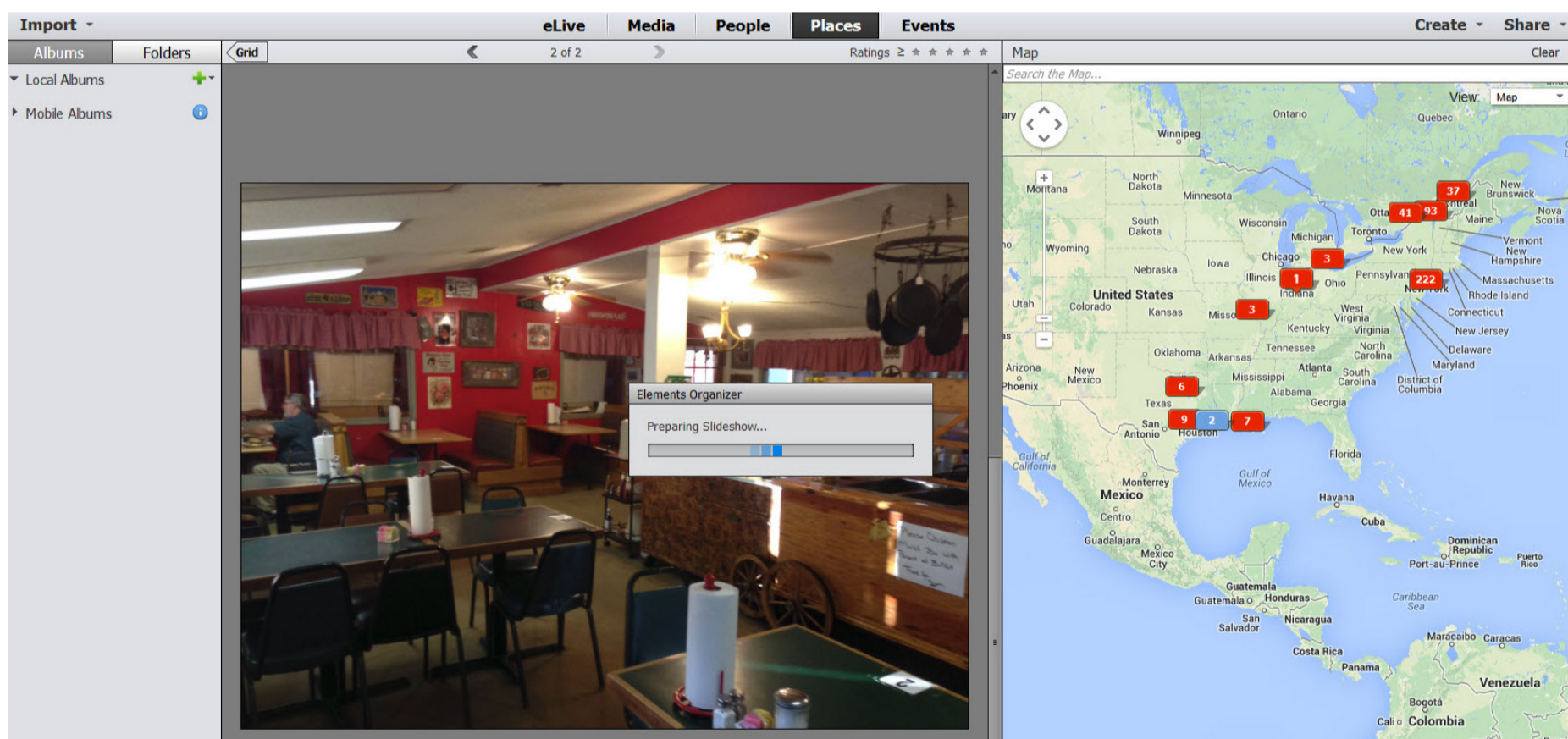
THE NEW ORGANIZING BASICS

Elements 13 is available for both Windows (7 or later) and Mac OS X (10.8 or later) in native 64-bit code—important, as mega-megapixel cameras' file sizes continue to grow. The new version adds support for Windows High DPI displays and Mac Retina displays. On my system, the installation takes up a massive 3.5GB of drive space, so make sure you have plenty of headroom available.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

PROS Lots of powerful image-manipulation tools. Strong face- and geo-tagging, with integrated maps. Excellent output options. Solid help for advanced edits.

CONS Separate organizer app is less integrated than that of other photo apps. Slow import. Large footprint.



The Organizer still includes face- and geo-tagging with built-in maps, and lets you add captions, star ratings, and tags, and do basic fixes such as rotation and auto-corrections. With version 13, the Organizer gets a justified thumbnail view in addition to the fixed-size thumbnails, for a more appealing, modern look, similar to that of the new Flickr home page. The full-screen view of Organizer, with collapsible toolbars, lets your

PLACES MODE

Use Photoshop Elements' powerful Places mode to quickly map where you shot your photos.

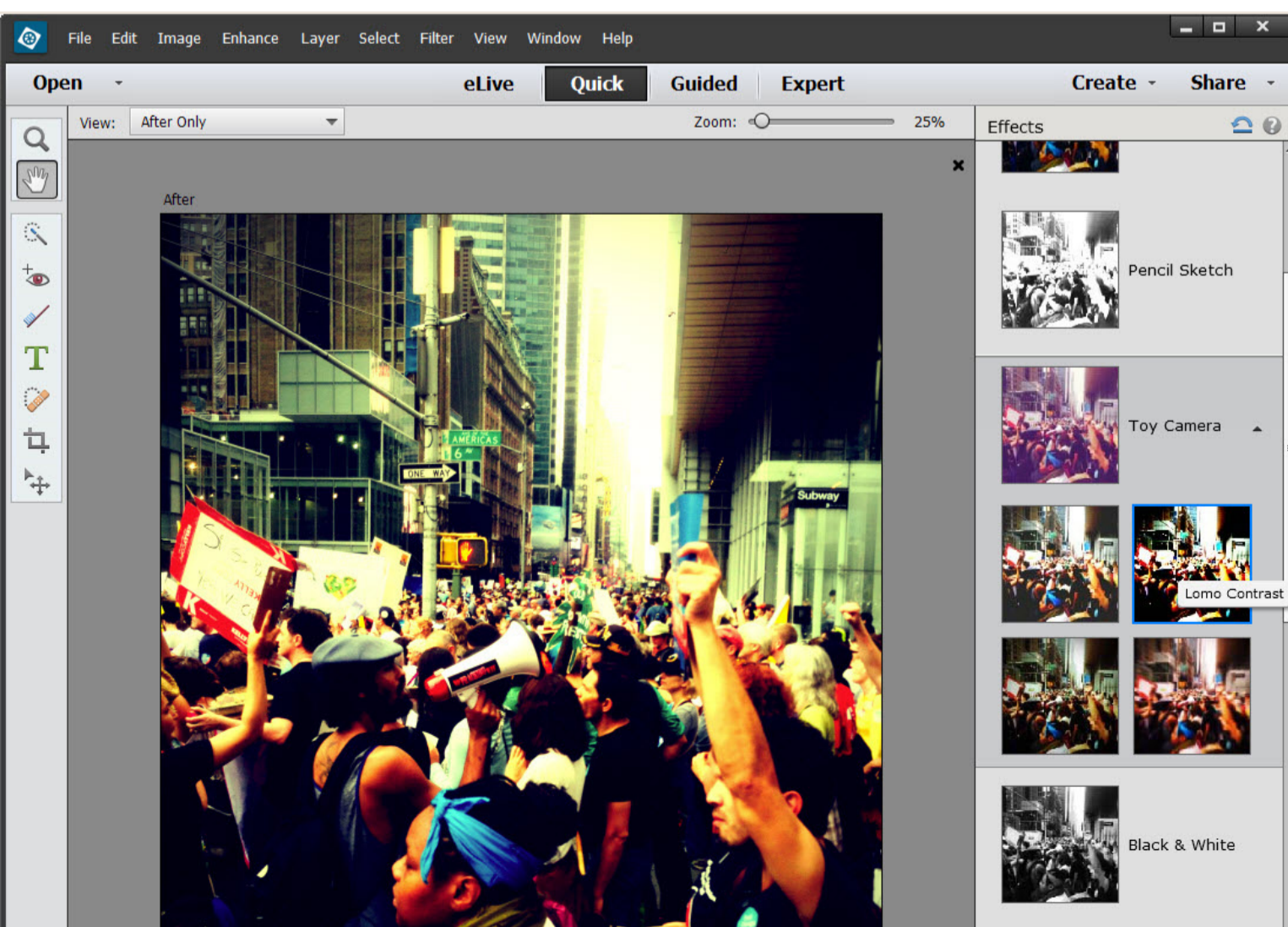
photo take center stage; too bad no similar view is available in the full editing app. In general, I like Elements' clean, simple interface, which always emphasizes your images.

Though Lightroom and Picasa make it easy to get photos from memory cards into the software, Elements' Organizer interface still outstrips those of products in its own category—Serif PhotoPlus X6 and Corel PaintShop Pro. That said, importing with Photoshop Elements wasn't especially fast: 50 full-frame raw images from a Sony Alpha 7R took 5 minutes, 11 seconds, compared with 1 minute, 22 seconds, in Corel PaintShop Pro X7.

ADJUSTING PHOTOS

As always, Photoshop Elements really comes into its own when you move from the Organizer to its full editor app. The program makes many of Photoshop proper's high-end image manipulation capabilities available, but without the same degree of difficulty. Many of the tools, particularly content-aware ones that let you do things like removing areas or objects without disrupting the background, are unique to Adobe software.

New effects make Elements feel like Instagram squared, with control over the effects that the mobile app could only dream of. Version 13 brings even more possibilities, with Quick mode's FX options offering four variations on the standard Vintage, Cross Process, and Toy Camera options, among seven others. I like how this tool shows your actual image under the influence of the effect, rather than just samples the way Instagram does.



**EVEN MORE
SPECIAL EFFECTS**
By offering you four
options under each FX
filter effect, Elements'
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beyond that of, say,
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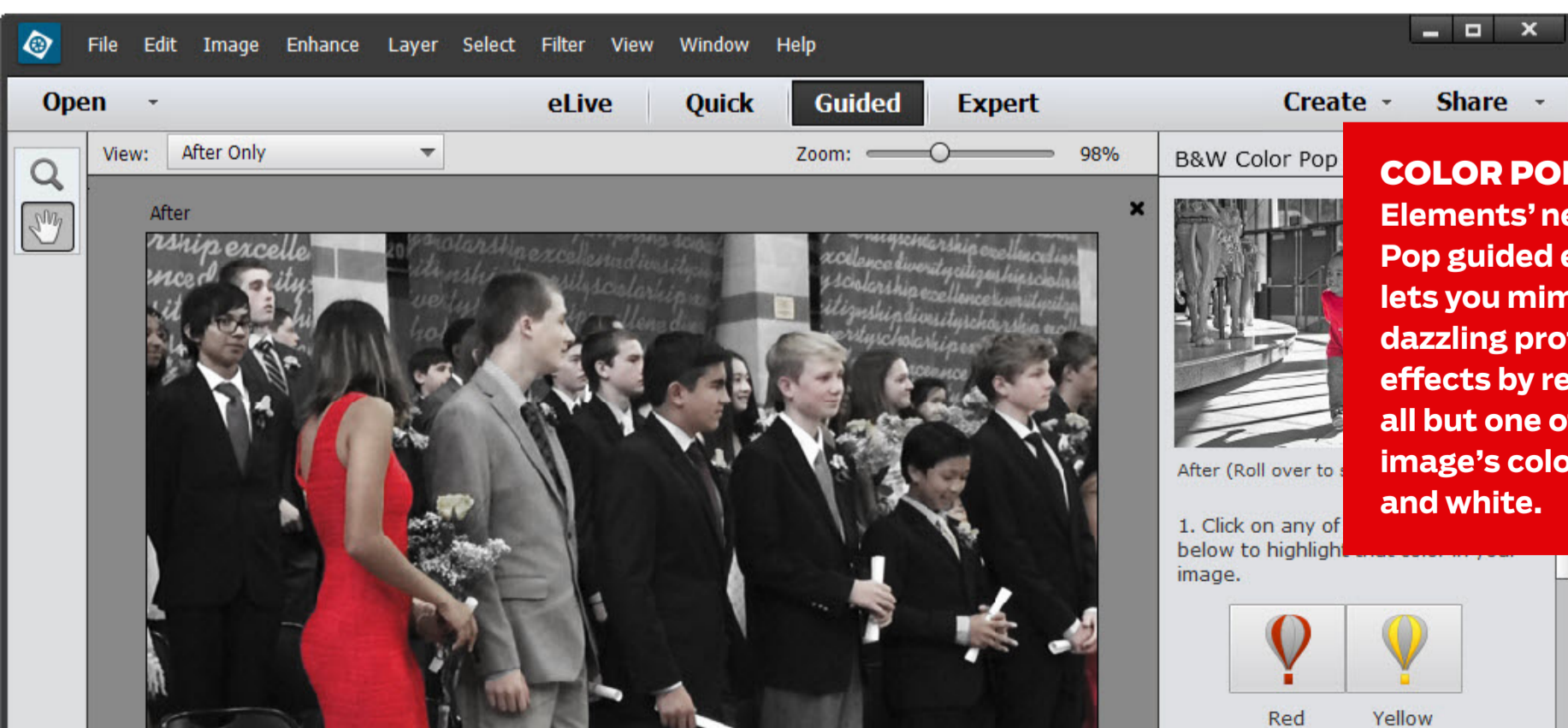
New for Elements 13 is Crop Suggestions. When you choose the crop tool, you now see four proposed crops in the bottom panel, based on faces found and other criteria. It actually worked quite impressively, framing group photos and suggesting creative looks for landscapes.

Elements not only can improve your digital photographs, but it also brings loads of drawing and layered effects to the table as well. Selecting objects in your images for treatment is key to this kind of image manipulation. The selection tool in Elements 13 is now more powerful, with the new Refine Selection Brush. This tool uses a circle with inner and outer selection circumferences, and the brilliance of it is that it switches between adding and subtracting from your selection depending on whether you're inside or outside the original selection.

Other new features include Photomerge Group Shot, which lets you get the best expression on each person's face from a series of group shot; Scene Cleaner, for removing passersby from a landscape or famous site; Exposure, or high dynamic range (HDR), which is used for fixing lighting by using two or more shots and moving the resulting images; and Photomerge Compose, which streamlines the process of adding objects from one photo into another.

GUIDED EDITS

The step-by-step Guided Edits take you through the process of creating an effect that would be a major undertaking in Photoshop proper. New Guided edits in version 13 focus on black-and-white techniques. One of my favorite effects is B&W Color Pop, where most of an image is black and white, which just a single touch of a single color. Photoshop Elements lets you pick from four basic colors—red, yellow, blue, or green—to be in color. In my testing, it let me get some nifty effects.



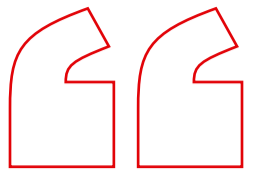
The new B&W Selection Guided Edit is similar: It lets you select an object you want to keep its color, while the rest of the image is monochromatic. It takes advantage of Elements' excellent selection tool.

The last new B&W Guided Edit is plain-old Black and White, which offers four presets—Light, Lighter, Dark, and Darker—as well as controls for diffuse-glow effects and contrast. This one is particularly well suited to portrait work.

SHARING AND OUTPUT

These days the most common way to share photos is through Facebook. Elements 13 adds a feature that makes two of your most important Facebook photos stand out—the profile and cover photos. The Create menu's Facebook Cover tool can automatically blend your cover and profile photos for a unique effect using a choice of two themes. (Adobe says it will be adding more continually.) One creates a profile pic that looks like part of the cover photo, and the other frames multiple images. The tool's results met my expectations with a matched photo pair.

That's far from the only sharing option in Elements' Create and Share panels. Elements gives the most output options of any consumer photo editor—whether you're into creating slideshows, sending picture emails,

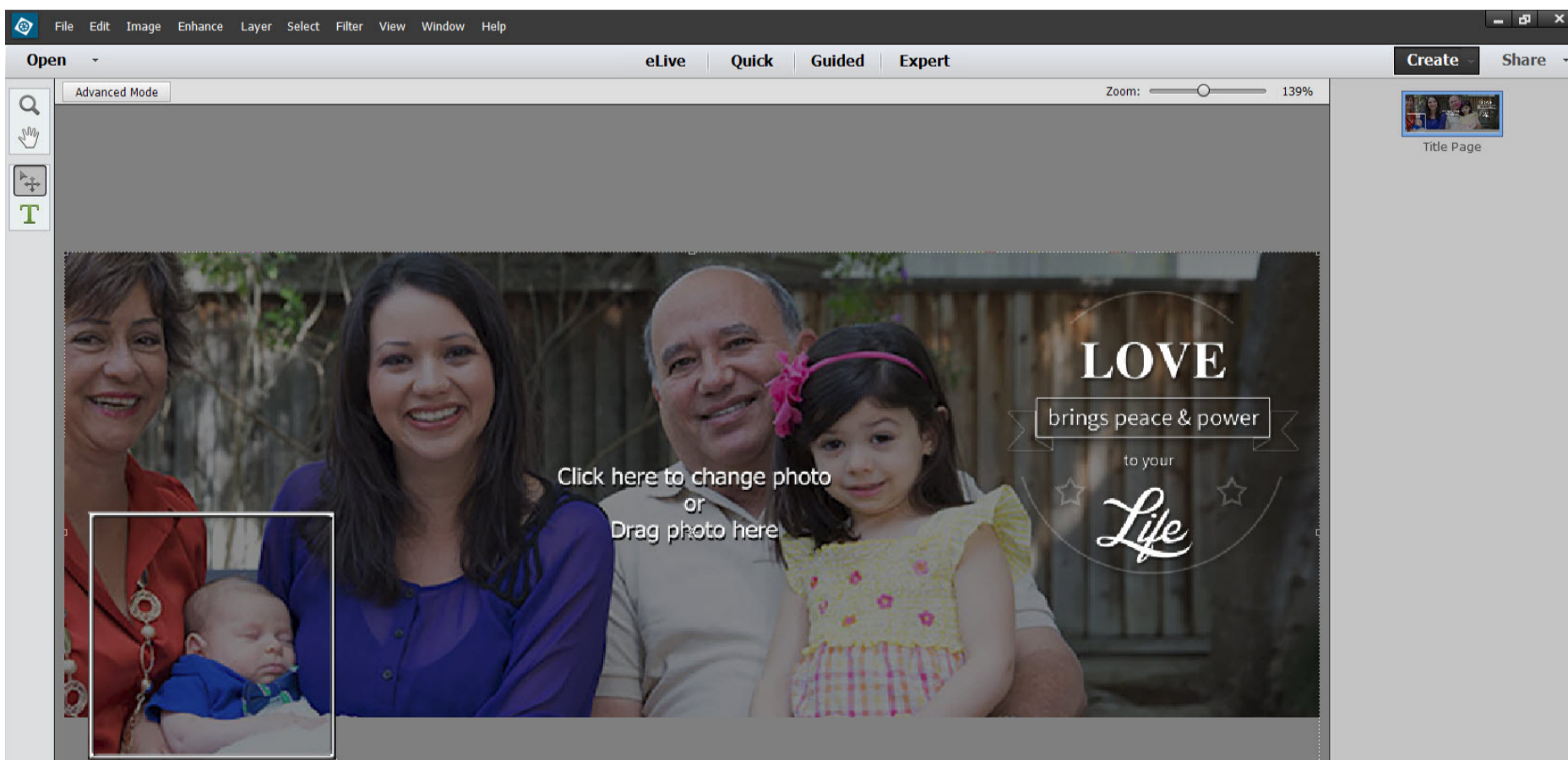


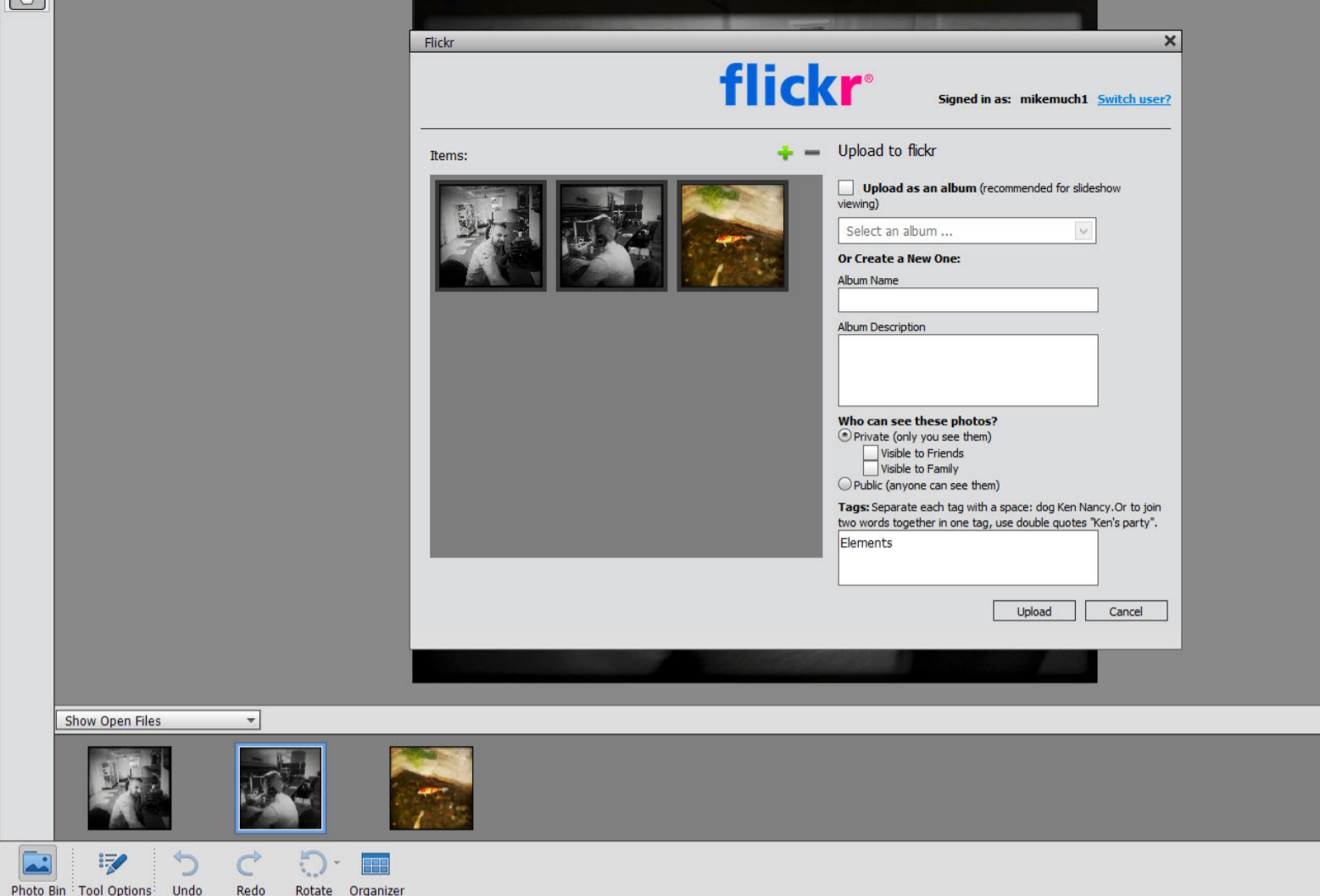
Elements 13 adds a feature that makes two of your most important Facebook photos stand out.



COVER TO COVER

New tools in Elements 13 let you easily share photos on Facebook. Shown here is the Cover tool, for creating a perfectly proportioned Cover shot for your Timeline.





SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE
Elements offers a wealth of sharing options, letting you post your photos on Facebook, SmugMug, and Flickr.

printing via Shutterfly, burning discs, or uploading to Web galleries. You can directly upload to your favorite online photo sites, including not only Facebook, but also Flickr, SmugMug, and Adobe's own Revel service. One minor disappointment is that keyword tags in Elements don't carry over into Flickr.

Slideshow creation is particularly detailed: You can even specify duration and transition style for each image. Elements 13 adds several new styles, such as Classic Dark and The Minimalist. Pan and Zoom and appropriate background music? Not a problem. Some new options let you put multiple images on a single slide. The collage feature offers a few layouts and good control, but Windows Photo Gallery actually offers a cooler collage effect. Finally, the calendar builder offers 31 themes for holidays and other topics.

IT'S STILL ELEMENTARY

If you want to organize and do interesting, creative things with your images, but don't want to invest the time and money in learning Photoshop, Elements 13 is your best option. It offers a generous subset of what's in Photoshop itself at a much lower price. Competitors don't come close to Elements' array of dazzling photo effects, organizational tools, and sharing and output options. With best-in-class tools for getting creative with your digital images, Adobe Photoshop Elements 13 remains our Editors' Choice for enthusiast photo editing.

MICHAEL MUCHMORE

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