

PhotoTune 2

\$159.95; www.ononesoftware.com/detail.php?prodLine_id = 27

Good photo restoration involves several disparate skills, some of which are purely artistic. The artistic ones are the hardest ones to teach, which is why I devote so much of this book to discussing restoring tone and restoring color (Chapters 5 and 6). Still, mastering the aesthetic side of restoration is something that many otherwise superbly competent restorers have trouble with. In particular, getting skin tones to come out looking natural demands a high level of skill because we are so sensitive to their appearance.

There's no long learning curve on PhotoTune 2. It has two modules: ColorTune 2 does broad-based color and tone correction, while SkinTune 2 is intended for correcting flesh tones (but I found that it's good for fine-tuning many photos with important colors in that part of the spectrum).

ColorTune 2 takes a comparison approach that is like a game of 20 Questions. You repeatedly tell the plug-in which of two test images looks better, and it homes in on your preferences. You can save the final adjustment settings as snapshots to use on other photos that need similar corrections, and batch process photographs using your saved settings. It's a real timesaver when you need something more akin to high-quality production printing than custom lab work.

I started with the high school portrait at right. ColorTune 2 corrected it using a six-question process (Figure 3-13). The trick is to not overthink the problem. I stumbled a bit at first, because I'd try to decide which test photo looked good, as opposed to merely better. Frequently neither the left nor right versions looked good. Eventually I realized that often the right choice was to leave the intensity slider at its lowest setting, pick whichever version



Fig. 3-13 ColorTune 2 does broad-based color and tone correction using a comparison approach that is like a game of 20 Questions. In the final stage, shown here, you can fine-tune the software’s best guess, achieving pretty good color correction very quickly and easily.

struck my fancy, and not worry too much about it. Just as with the 20 Questions, the early answers aren’t going to be right. They are only there to help guide the software to a good solution. The final control panel (bottom of [Figure 3-13](#)) lets the user modify the settings, which does a lot to improve the software’s results.

SkinTune 2 is really great for getting just the right skin tones. It presents you with an array of carefully chosen skin tones from which to choose ([Figure 3-14](#)). You can pick the general ethnicity of the subject, which restricts the palette of skin colors to the ones most likely to be correct for that segment of the population. Alternately, you can leave it wide open and select among them all.

Once you’ve picked a plausible skin tone, you can fine-tune it with sliders that will alter the hue and saturation. It only takes a little trial and error to hit on a result that’s entirely pleasing. Honestly, there’s not much more to say about this plug-in. That’s a feature—no steep learning curve!



Fig. 3-14 SkinTune 2 is a great way to adjust skin tones without a steep learning curve ... or Curves adjustments. It's ideal for folks who find achieving that just-right skin tone an elusive goal.