

Simple to use but exceptionally powerful

By Matthew K. Morgan (Ruther Glen, VA USA), April 21, 2009

Drawing and sketching programs seem to fall into two general categories - very powerful but excessively complex, or simple to use but lacking in options and power. SketchBook Pro successfully combines power and simplicity into one package, such that even a weak artist can be productive and successful.



Being new to SketchBook Pro myself, I was startled by the sparse interface when opening a new canvas. There was little on the screen other than the main menu up top and the lagoon in the lower left. Most drawing applications clutter the screen with an assortment of toolbars, palettes, wizards and other things that just get in the way. Autodesk keep their application simple instead, putting the essentials out there and leaving everything else off the screen until it's really needed.

Most elements of the application are available in radial menus, accessible either through clicking on icons on the lagoon or right-clicking on the canvas. All menu items have help tips to guide along the way so you know what option you're choosing. Radial menus can be a surprise to those who have never been exposed to them, but once used to them they are very powerful and easy to use.

Plunging into the various options available, I immediately discovered a couple of things I have never before used in drawing applications. First, I discovered the symmetry options, which makes creating mirror images easy. Using the axis, I was able to draw a crude figure of a person in about 10 seconds without even expending any real thought. Even more productive for me, though, was the ruler, especially in combination with the layering tool. The ruler is a slight misnomer, as it is actually more of a straight-edge against which to draw straight lines.

Another interesting surprise was the help system. When I launched the help system, rather than bring up a compiled help file, my default web browser launched and I was presented with one of the best help systems I have seen. The help is easy on the eyes and very straightforward to use. There is sufficient detail with pictures to address almost any conceivable question that might arise.

SketchBook Pro is very fast and very responsive on my system. I am running Vista with 3GB of ram and a dual-core 2.1G Intel processor, and there is only the slightest hint of hesitation on rare occasion.

Having never played with SketchBook Pro before and being a poor artist, I was shocked that I could create viable results in minutes. In the hands of a professional artist, this is a powerful and easy-to-use package. Emphasis was placed on productivity, but power was not taken away.

The Ultimate Foundation

By David Guertin - April 18, 2009

About five years ago I had a tough decision to make--keep working traditionally with the occasional digital painting or make the jump to a fully digital workflow. Wacom's Cintiq line of tablets took care of the hardware but on the software side I had never been happy with Photoshop or Painter. Both programs, while sporting a broad range of tools for painting, lacked the fluidity and finesse for clean natural drawing.

Enter Sketchbook Pro.

From the first stroke within the program I knew an all digital workflow was possible in every way. Gone were the chunky stepping and unresponsive mark making of the other apps in the market. Sketchbook was silky smooth with every mark, every time. Years later, Sketchbook continues to serve as the rock solid foundation to my all digital workflow. Roughs, pencils, and inks are a joy to put together with the software. Coupled with the fantastic brush engine, 2010 incorporates some amazing new features including ruler and ellipse guides, symmetry tools, texture brushes, and fully customizable marking menus for seamless workflows.

So if you're looking to spend more time drawing rather than fighting with sluggish software, give Sketchbook a look. For responsive clean strokes and clutter free workflow, nothing can touch it.

Worthy Award Winner

By Seanna - April 29, 2009

Autodesk SketchBook Pro 2010 is quality paint/drawing software designed for use with a graphic tablet and pen. However it will also work with a conventional mouse but getting quality results is more difficult that way.

I installed in on a Windows XP SP3 computer along with a Bamboo Tablet/Pen and it works smoothly and with no problems. I also tried it on a Vista Laptop but unfortunately Vista 64 bit is not supported yet so please take note.

The program is excellent, the interface is easy to use and with a flick of your pen you can access the many features including pencils, brushes, markers, layers and pan/zoom tools.

This software is so good that even people who have little drawing ability can soon get great results. I would claim to be average at drawing but this program is so versatile and intuitive that I can get excellent results at times. It also increases my workflow because of the processing speed and easy accessibility of all the features.

It is difficult to compare it to other programs. Sure there are other paint programs like Photoshop or Painter but nothing compares to the ease and flexibility of using this program and at \$100 it is a fraction of the price of other drawing programs.

If you still want to use Photoshop, then draw with this one and enhance your picture with Photoshop. This will save in most formats; it uses layered TIF images but it will also open/save BMP, GIF, JPG, PNG files and PSD files for use in Adobe Photoshop.

I highly recommend this software, it doesn't need much selling because it is already award winning and used by a stream of respectable computer artists and designers. All I can say is that if you have artistic ambitions and want a good program to enhance them then it is well worth a look at.

Sketching made easy

By TRFB - April 22, 2009

I really like this product. I wish they had this software when I was really into drawing and sketching. This takes the concept of sketching to a whole new level. With computer-based sketching and drawing programs such as Autodesk Sketchbook Pro 2010, the concept of layers become so much easier to design pictures with ease. So, you can layer several portions of your drawing and if you choose to remove a portion of your picture it can be removed easily without affecting the drawing as a whole.

The tools are simple and very easy to use. Everything is right on the screen that you'll need. The menu system for changing the type of medium you use; pencil, airbrush, eraser, etc are all easily accessible and great to use. This software was designed to be used with a tablet. This allows the variation of hard and soft lines to be used. With sketching with a regular pencil, it is important to capture the variation of light and dark strokes. This software does that very well. You can also set the "weight" of the pencil so you don't have to press really hard to get a dark stroke either. It's fully customizable.

Also, you have the ability to change the color of your brush or pencil. This is such a fun program. The ability to use symmetry is great because you can draw an image on one side of the line and it will automatically duplicate it on the other side. So, if you want to draw a picture of a body of water and have a "reflection" of objects off the water, you can do this. Or if you need the same object to appear on both sides, or even one big object that needs to be the same on both sides, you can use this feature. Very cool.

The "help" is all within the software, so don't look for any book. At first this was disappointing for me because I was expecting a book to read and learn about all of the features. But, when I went to the Help page and saw all of the great tips and topics, it was easy to navigate and find the answers I needed.

The other feature that can be useful is the "SnapShot" feature. What this does is it allows you to bring something on your screen, click on the snapshot icon on your system tray and it will take a picture of that onto your clipboard. Then when you open the Autodesk Sketchbook Pro 2010 software, it will bring that screen capture right on the canvas. You can then sketch around it. Very neat tool. I haven't found a use for it in my case, but you may.

I recommend this product if you like to sketch using the computer and have a tablet. I wouldn't recommend using this product with a mouse. It's really designed for a pen/tablet.