

# Topaz Software: Improve Images and Let Imagination Run Wild

By: Pamela Cohen 3/21

## *AS A PHOTOGRAPHER ...*

Your camera will make the photograph, as an artist/photographer you must control it from the minute the image formulates in the mind, hitting the shutter button, then progressing along to the point of artistic finality. Topaz can let personality and creativity run wild to achieve a unique interpretation. Its usage is particularly satisfying when out of camera images cause boredom and creative instincts are at a standstill and the photographer craves more. The programs are state of the art engineered with algorithms that are designed to incorporate advanced software editing techniques and interpretation via artificial intelligence.

- \* You Tubers say when they “paint” in Topaz it is making their images “works of art”.
- \* P. Cohen says: Aren’t all photographs works of art? YES, in the eyes if the creator.
- \* Can they be images in a fine art gallery? NO, not much of a chance.
- \* Try it for fun.

## *WHAT IS TOPAZ SOFTWARE USED FOR?*

It can process general edits, then go further using powerful artificial intelligence. It is intended to boost a creative workflow, and enhance image quality. Offers batch processing for some programs to help speed up workflow. Can be used in tandem with Lightroom, Photoshop, Luminar, and On 1.

## *WHAT IS TOPAZ SOFTWARE NOT USED FOR?*

It is not a “crutch”, patch, or excuse to cover a poor quality image. It is not a method of organizing images, keynoting nor does it function as an image manager.

## *WHICH SOFTWARE TO USE:*

*Choice should be determined by purpose and intended goal. Be aware, if using the improper software or using a series in the wrong order, ineffective results can occur. The AI in various softwares are trained for various purposes, therefore, the user needs to be educated. The descriptions below should help decide which software is needed for the intended outcome.*

## SOFTWARE PROGRAMS: 2021

Gigapixel AI	Video Enhance AI
Sharpen AI	Mask AI
Denoise AI	Adjust AI
Studio 2	JPEG to RAW AI

## BUNDLES OFFERED: 3/21

The Utility Bundle: Sharpen AI, Gigapixel AI, Denoise AI, JPEGtoRAW AI  
The Creator Bundle: Mask AI Adjust AI, Studio 2  
Prices and bundles can vary frequently.

## PRICES:

All of the programs have certain licenses at various prices. From time to time specials are offered. As of 2021, do be aware some licenses have free updates,(ex. Studio) but others may require a payment annually to update to the current software version ( ex. Denoise AI, Gigapixel). If the annual fee isn't authorized, the current version remains but won't receive updates when availblale. There are no monthly subscriptions.

## DISCOUNT FOR PURCHASES:

**promo code with no expiration date: loyal15**

**(no caps no spaces)**

Type in loyal15 in the check out.

( This has been given to me by Topaz, I do not receive sponsorship nor monies from the company)

## REQUIREMENTS:

Each of these programs have various requirements for Windows and MAC. All need at least 8GB of RAM minimum and updated Graphic Processing Units (GPU) to provide fast graphics. See the website [www.topazlabs.com](http://www.topazlabs.com) for system requirements for each product.

Most programs can be integrated as plugins into Lightroom Classic and Photoshop, some run as standalones.

## FOR USAGE:

As of 3/1/21 : 10.16/11 Big Sur Mac: is compatible with Intel but not M1 processors. Studio 2, Mask AI, Denoise AI, Gigapixel AI, and Sharpen AI will work with Big Sur.

Older versions of the softwares may not be compatible with Big Sur.

These programs take a great deal of power, it is advised to close all other applications that aren't being used to ensure optimum functioning. Do keep on mind, large files take longer to process.

## HOW TO BEGIN:

Import free 30 day downloads or purchased products into your computer.

Instructions for installation is available in detail on :

[www.topazlabs.com](http://www.topazlabs.com)

It is best to close all other computer applications prior to installation.

\* If you update a version of a purchased product, it will automatically be added in LR & PS.

\* CREATE A PERSONAL WORKFLOW:

Joel Wolfson has YouTube tutorials that demonstrates his workflow using Topaz.

[www.joelwolson.com](http://www.joelwolson.com). Other tutorials on YouTube are available as well. Joel has given me permission to use his workflow in my lecture, which is in the Keynote part. If you want a free copy of it in a pdf, click his website, ask for the workflow chart and mention I referred you to his website.

Import images as Tiff files (recommended by Topaz engineers) RAW can be used but results aren't as good.

Once editing is performed in Topaz, the image can be exported to a folder of choice or reverted back to its original destination. Further tweaking in the original software can be utilized. Edited images can be exported in many file formats. In Studio 2, one of the options is TS2, it is the only format that keeps all the layers, common to Photoshop.

*Four softwares are outlines below:*

## *DENOISE AI* ... Segments: Denoise, AI Clear & Low Light

Version 2.4.2 - Latest software update as of 3/21

### **What needs to be clarified in this software:**

Brighten ... across top in the tool bar is not to lighten the image, it is to brighten the preview.

There is AI Clear in Studio 2 as well as in Denoise.

\*\*\* It is extremely important to understand that this software's algorithms are compiled to aid in CAPTURE SHARPENING... the sharpening that needs to be done from the camera itself as a result of a bypass filter on a DSLR or other loss of sharpening from a mirrorless camera.

\*\*\* The program will remove noise as well as improve CAPTURE SHARPENING.. it is NOT designed to fix poorly focused images, or loss of focus due to blur or motion. Although, a slight improvement can be seen due to the software adding detail to the image.

\*\*\* For images that are intensely out of focus, Sharpen AI would be the software of choice. If utilizing both softwares, use the Denoise program first, then Sharpen AI.

(See [www.cambridgeincolour.com](http://www.cambridgeincolour.com) "Guide to Image Sharpening" as a helpful guide for understanding the types of sharpening).

### THREE SEGMENTS:

#### AI CLEAR:

Use for High ISO images

Use for High Noise images

Good for general purposes

Technology knows if noise is present & corrects

Sharpens details

## DENOISE:

Removes excess noise.  
Preserves details

## LOW LIGHT:

Use for High Noise  
Use for Loss of detail

## METHODOLOGY & NOTATIONS:

The software will display all three of the above noted segments.

In the tool bar, it is helpful use the comparison view to display four windows, and set the view at 100%. One will be the original image, the other three will be the segments. On the right side above the auto update preview, the image will also be displayed. It is advised to immediately position the white rectangular box within the image onto the critical part of the image. Otherwise, each time the box is repositioned, the software will take time to update all the segments.

In Auto, set at the four window view, all three softwares will cycle and configure the usage of the program one by one and will show in the comparisons. Many times Auto is the choice, it uses AI to select the best parameters for the software's algorithm. The choice will be highlighted in blue. Auto is very reliable but not always the best, if that's the case, just click on the one of choice, then export. Try manual if the desired results aren't achieved. Further sliders and masks are available to manually adjust the image.

\*\*\*\*\* When using Denoise, at this time Topaz recommends not using Lightroom's luminance denoise or sharpening before editing. LR's luminance in excess amounts causes artifacts even if using the details slider. In the develop module of LR, take the luminance denoise slider to zero, the color (chroma) noise to about 25, and the sharpen slider to zero.

\* LR, texture, clarity and dehaze sliders can add noise, they aren't advised for usage before applications of this software.

LAUNCH DENOISE: it will be a plugin in LR, PS and Luminar in the current version. In Luminar 4 under Edit, click Plugins.

If used in PS, changes made in softwares can be designated by layers and further editing can be accomplished.

Portraits: Auto Denoise sometimes causes the face to lose detail, which can be corrected:

Use Manual > Recover Details> adjust slider

## OTHER BENEFITS:

The processes are global adjustments to the entire image. It is possible to apply a mask, use a brush tool and work selectively within areas of the image.

Batch processing is available, images that are imported will have the option of using the same editing or may be edited separately without going in and out of the program.

## STUDIO 2 ... Segments: Add Filter, Add Look

Version 2.3.2 latest version as of 3/21

### **What needs to be clarified in this software:**

Topaz 2 offers an unimaginable array of leeway for editing. Its limitations are boundless and addicting. The beauty is having all editing adjustments offered in one place, including AI Clear, then going further for making painterly looks or adding textures or abstracts as found in AI Remix. An entire array of basic adjustments can be found here along with a crop tool, and spot removal.

It is an update from Topaz Studio1 and Adjust.

It consists of effect layers which are defined in two categories:  
Add filters & Add looks.

### METHODOLOGY& NOTATIONS:

*Add Filter:* Categorized into the following parts: Essentials, Creative, Stylistic (where controls for Impression, Textures & AI Remix reside) and Plugins. Extensive modifications can be made here along with adding masks.

*Add Look:* A series of presets which can be sorted or searched. An image can be easily changed by selecting the preset, leaving as is or setting the opacity and blending mode. It is a very easy method of utilizing the software. Do note that using the look at 100% is extreme and it is advised to lessen the opacity.

Multiple layers can be added to the file from each category.

\*\*\*\* If you have previously used Topaz 1 and now imported 2, you will notice many of the presets from version1 no longer exist. Here is how you get them back:

Pull down HELP > Migrate > select your choice or choices. If you want favorites, they must have been designated in Topaz 1 as favorites by clicking on the heart icon under the preset name. Click the hearts back in Version 1 before you attempt to migrate. In version 2 the migrated presets will be designated as TS1 under the preset.

Your own in camera textures or purchased textures from online sources can be made and stored into the Topaz filter inventory. I create my own editing and texture presets and use them in my personal workflow.

Easy masking is available to brush in or out when applying textures, colors, effects etc. Various blending modes are applicable and are the same categories as those in PS. Each layer can saved if exported as a TS2 file which adds and keeps creative layers for future editing in the future .To obtain the option to export as a TS2, use the software as a standalone, otherwise, the completed file will be exported in the format of choice and be reverted back to its original software such as LR, PS. etc.TS2 is not a choice when in this situation.

Backgrounds in images are critical to the beauty and integrity of the image, adding textures to achieve the look can bring the image to a new level. Texture layers are very effective when used with images that have a great deal of negative space. The blending modes, opacity, and position can yield unique perspectives.

#### OTHER BENEFITS:

Can access purchased or trial softwares from inside this software. To access, scroll to the bottom of the Add Texture panel where other softwares will be listed as plugins.

Can add text to the image and position wherever desired. Fonts are determined by those which are downloaded to the working device.

#### OTHER COMMENTS:

\* Batch processing is not available as of yet, each image should be processed individually anyway, to ensure maximum creativity.

## GIGAPIXEL AI ...

Version: 5.4.4 latest version as of 3/21

### **What needs to be clarified in this software:**

Gigapixel can significantly upscale an older image made from a cell phone, digital camera, slides that are scanned at low resolution, or still images made from a drone or video.

It claims to have less noisy interpolation than Photoshop's method of interpolation of pixels.

Neural networks working inside artificial intelligence configure pixels and upsize.

It has the ability for: facial refinement, noise reduction, and improving some blur.

It isn't the choice of software to correct intensely out of focus images.

### METHODOLOGY & NOTATIONS:

Three sections include:

Resize Mode, AI Mode, Additional Settings

*Resize Mode:* Options are for setting scale. Upsizing to various degrees or choosing a set amount of pixels per inch in width or height.

*AI Mode:* Configured in Standard, Architectural, Compressed, and Art.

A description of each of these views is defined by clicking on the question mark next to AI Mode.

*Settings Mode:* Areas to suppress noise, reduce color bleed or for face refinement.

### *To begin:*

There is a window on the right top panel showing the image. In the auto update preview, it contains a white box, which is where the most important part of the image should be set on. As in the Denoise program, it is advised to click on that area immediately. If the area is reconfigured, it wastes time to calculate the view.

View Mode: Most effective if viewed side by side.

Set percentage of zoom.



## RESIZE MODE:

Crop: Do this first if not already imported with the desired crop.

Choose: Scale, width or height

AI MODE: View the difference of the image in all of the four modes by moving through each. There can be a significant difference or a slight one.

SETTINGS: Suppress noise and Remove Blur is set for its default, but can be reconfigured. Clicking Auto usually functions well.

Additional settings to reduce color bleed and improve face refinement are offered.

\*\*\*\*Face refinement is not intended to improve portraits or close ups of people. Its AI was trained to improve small faces in crowds.

## OTHER BENEFITS:

This software can render really amazing results and can save images that were never thought possible.

Images can be batch processed with the same settings or individually.

Files may be upsized or downsized.

In Resize Mode, at 0.5x the amount of pixels will be reduced in half. This method allows downsizing for social media sites and can be very effective for certain applications especially when used in batch processing.

## OTHER COMMENTS:

\*\*\*\* Expect this software to take a great amount of time to configure especially if the upsizing is 6x or more. It is advised to close other softwares before using, especially ones that take a great deal of power like Photoshop. Once the process begins, don't press any other buttons. Otherwise the program can get stuck and/or the computer can crash.

***SHARPEN AI ...***

Version: v.2.2.4 as of 3/21

## **What needs to be clarified in this software:**

Sharpen's software was "fed" an enormous amount of images, training what is in focus and what isn't. Its Artificial Intelligence capabilities are astonishing.

The main goal is to improve images where the focus wasn't set properly, the camera or photographer caused movement, or the subject was moving. It will help with images where a tripod wasn't used or the shutter speed was not high enough to compensate for movement. It can improve capture sharpening but was designed for more intense sharpening.

\* Can achieve minor noise reduction but not at high ISOs.

## **METHODOLOGY & NOTATIONS:**

Three sections include:

AI Mode: Sharpen, Stabilize, Focus

Sharpen: designed for general sharpening

Stabilize: to improve shake

Focus: improve minor focal blur

## **SETTINGS:**

Manual sliders for: sharpness, noise suppression, extra noise suppression

## **POST PROCESSING:**

Manual Slider for adding grain

To begin:

View the window on the right top panel showing the image. In the auto update preview, it contains a white box, which is where the most important part of the image should be set on. As in the Denoise and Gigapixel programs, it is advised to click on that area immediately. If the area is reconfigured, it wastes time to calculate the view.

Set View: Side by side can be effective, or as in Denoise AI, the four window view set on auto will cycle through all the modes.

Set percentage of zoom.

#### OTHER BENEFITS:

Batch processing can be used. Several images can be brought in at once, each file can use all the same settings or each one can utilize its own AI Mode.

#### OTHER COMMENTS:

This is not an inexpensive software, therefore, the decision has to be made if it is the proper one for the intended needs. I hesitate to suggest this software as a crutch for out of focus images.

My experimentation was done to check effectiveness for removal of noise in very high ISO images, there was very little noise reduction. Therefore, the Denoise AI would be the selected software for this intention.

#### FINAL COMMENTS:

TAKE note of the capabilities laid out above for the variety of softwares, consider your specific needs, as well as the requirements of each program for your device, before making a purchase.

DO be very careful not to press any other buttons or viewing modes as the softwares are generating a preview. This can cause the software to not respond and /or the computer or other device to crash. Take time to be patient.

Topaz Labs doesn't offer help via phone, yet they have excellent customer service via email on the website.

The softwares are not stagnant in terms of moving forward and Topaz engineers strive to make valuable improvements.

I find these programs to be a cut above many others because of the advanced Artificial Intelligence which is on the cutting edge of technology for improvement in the digital realm of post processing photography.



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Imagination ...

Running

Wild ...



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