

Autopano Pro 1.4

Nick Veitch often finds himself with his back against the wall, but this time it's because he's trying to shoot a multi-picture panorama.



In brief...

» Autopano scans image collections for multi-image panoramas, then automatically assembles them for you. The only Linux alternative is to manually assemble in Gimp!



Graham says...

"The second largest digital photograph in the world (and largest landscape panorama) was stitched together by Gerard Maynard using Autopano Pro in 2007. See www.harlem-13-gigapixels.com."

» There are plenty of rendering options, the only one you really need to pay attention to is the file size!

Virtually everyone with a digital camera has tried it at some point. There you are, the image of your dreams revealed before you – the most fantastic landscape/seascape/graffiti wall/big hole in the ground, but you can't fit it all in the viewfinder without being able to levitate over a cliff or something. The only reasonable thing to do, you might think, is take several photos covering the area of the image you want to capture, then cunningly stitch them back together in Gimp later. It is only days later that the problems with this approach are apparent. In between pictures, the exposure, aperture, colours, white balance and any number of other things will have changed, reducing your chances of an effective panorama to something negligibly greater than nil.

Autopano Pro solves these problems, and plenty more, like magic, and it begins even before you start making panoramas! Open up a folder full of digital shots in the twin-paned main window, and you'll see that Autopano groups images using EXIF data to make it easier to find your panoramas. In fact, it will go further and examine creation times and image data to clump together groups of shots. These nascent panoramas then appear in a list on the right side of the window ready for tweaking. In practice, the auto discovery works pretty well, although it can easily be confused if you take multiple panoramas of the same view (maybe from a slightly different position). If that's the case though, you can easily add or remove individual shots from the group.

Click on the Edit button in one of the panorama groups, and you can now fine-tune the images and settings; if you just



» Point Autopano at a folder full of your landscape images and watch it group them all together and discover lots of panorama options for you – as if by magic!

want a straightforward panorama, you probably won't have to. Part of the magic of Autopano is the SIFT algorithm, which picks out the key points in the images and merges them together, twisting, bending and blending the pixels as it goes. Various tools along the top of the window allow individual images to be edited, or the whole subjected to some global procedure.

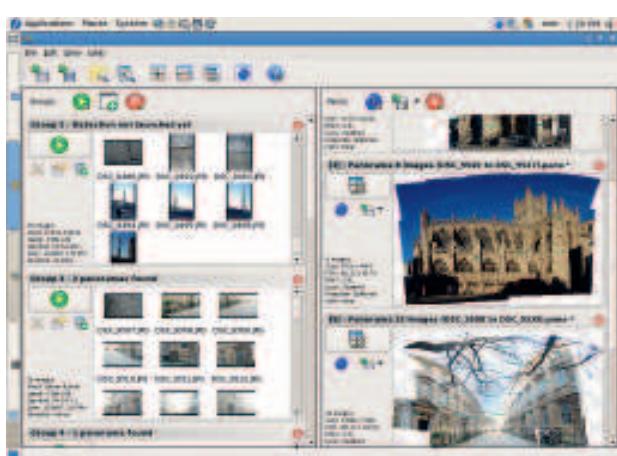
Simply wonderful

Simple adjustments like colour balance are easy to do. Complicated procedures, like adjusting the position of an individual image are a little harder, but obviously the whole procedure here is rather complex. Every effort has been made by the developers to save YOUR time and effort – there is even a handy auto-crop tool, which will square off the edges of the image to the maximum size.

When you are happy with the preview, it's time to do a final render; again, there are plenty of options here, mostly to do with the resulting file-format and image size. Obviously, the maximum image size is determined by the physical pixels available in your original shots, but it is rare that you would need a final image at full size. Even scaling down slightly, say to 90 per cent, will help remove some of the artefacts (not that there are many) from the original

image or the stitching process. It won't take too long either – on our test machine (a 2GHz duo Intel box with 2GB RAM) a 10-image panorama took just 2 minutes to render at full size (approx 5000x4000 pixels). Not bad eh?

As it uses licensed technology, Autopano's never going to be free, but the price tag means you're going to have to do a lot of panoramas to feel like you've got your money's worth from the software. On the other hand, if you do actually have a real need for the application, it is cheaper than buying a Mac and similar software – there just isn't any better way to do this sort of work on any platform. **LXF**



LINUX FORMAT Verdict

Autopano Pro 1.4.0

Developer: Kolor
Web: www.autopano.net
Price: €99 (about £70)

Features	10/10
Performance	9/10
Ease of use	10/10
Value for money	8/10

» Creates outstanding panoramic photo results with next to no fuss!

Rating 10/10