Making and Using Picture Frames

By JP Kabala

There are lots of big, splashy improvements in Paint Shop Pro 9 like Digital Camera Noise Removal and Art Media, and then there are the quiet, little things that don't get a lot of applause—they just make our work easier and open new areas of creative opportunity if we manage to notice them. One of those things is a little-noticed new option in the Picture Frames dialog that reads "Frame Current Layer." Since nothing much else changed in Paint Shop Pro 9's Picture Frame effect, it would be easy to let this one slide on by—but you'd be missing something nice.

This is an easy project, designed more to help spark your creativity and make you aware of a new option than anything else, but along the way we'll learn a little about Paint Shop Pro's Picture Frames, and even make a very simple but useful one. Then we'll finish off the project with just a touch of Art Media for a little added realism and flair.

What you'll need:
- Paint Shop™ Pro® 9
- Some photos—I've provided a few prepared images from my own archive, but you can follow along using your own photos if you like.

When you complete this tutorial, you'll be able to:
- Make a Selection from a Vector Object
- Make a Picture Frame
- Paste as a New Layer
- Apply a Picture Frame to the Contents of a Layer
- Use the Deform Tool

Create a Polaroid-Style Frame

This is one of the simplest frames to make—the only trick is to get the various proportions right, and I've already done the measuring and the math! And with Paint Shop Pro's new Shape Tools with precision placement, it's very quick work.

1. Open a new image. To ensure quality in later use, it is a good idea to make your Picture Frames as high-resolution files, because the software will automatically scale them up or down as needed, so we'll be working with a fairly large file at this point. Create the file as seen here.
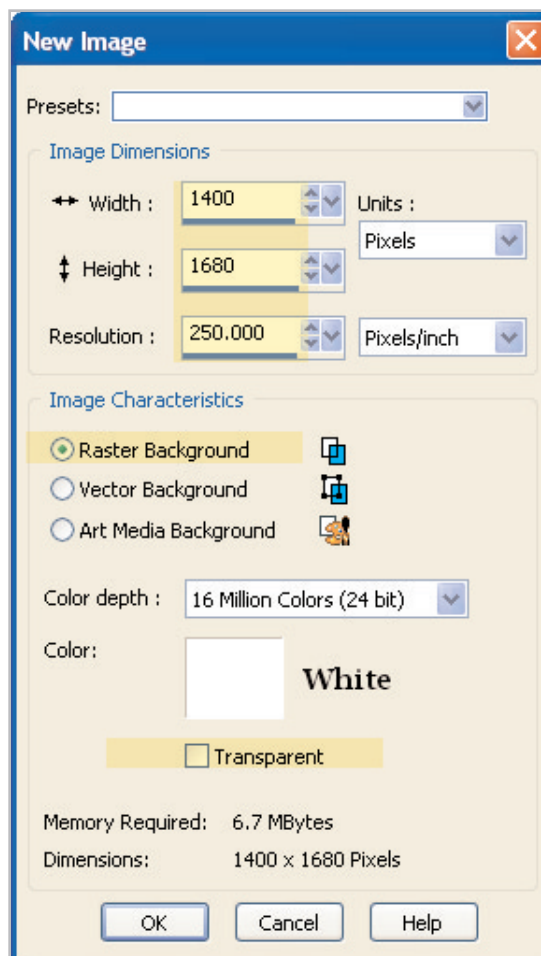
2. Zoom out so that you can see the entire canvas if necessary. From the Tools toolbar, select the **Rectangle** Tool. On the Tool Options Palette, make the choices shown here. Make sure that the Join is set to Miter- we want crisp corners!
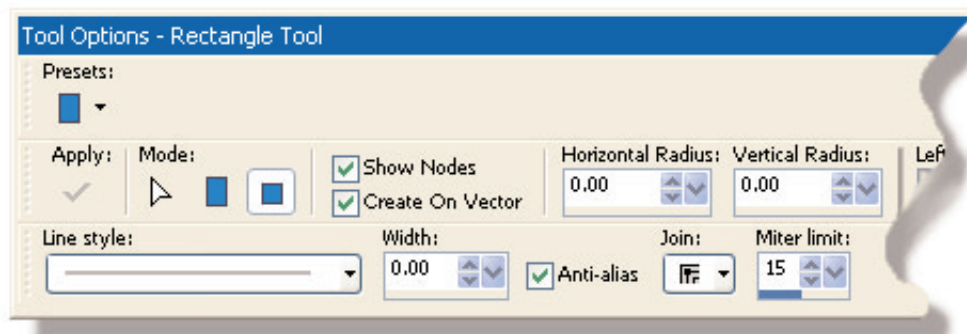
3. The image area in a Polaroid snapshot is square, so with the Rectangle tool set to Draw Square mode, click and drag out a square of any size anywhere on the canvas. The colors in the Foreground and Background swatches are not important, so long as neither of them is Null (no color). I've made mine bright so that they're easy to see in the illustrations. Do not click Apply yet, however.

4. Look at the Tool Options Palette. Several fields that were grayed out before are now accessible and have entered values. Change the following values:
   - Left: **80**
   - Top: **80**
   - Width: **1240**
   - Height: **1240**

   And click **Apply**. Now you have a perfectly proportioned and aligned silhouette of a Polaroid 600 snapshot! Just a few more steps and you'll have a frame!

5. Look at your Layer Palette (press **F8** to make it visible if it is hidden). Click the **[+]** sign to the left of the layer named "Vector 1" to expand the tree, and right-click the object named **New Rectangle** and choose **Create Raster Selection** (the last entry). A Marquee will appear around your square. Do not deselect, but right-click again, and choose **Clear**. Do not deselect, but right-click a third time and choose **Promote Background Layer**. Still without deselecting, click the Layer Palette entry for the bottom layer (now renamed Raster 1) and press the **Delete** key on your keyboard to cut a square hole in the white layer. Once you do that, you can press **CTRL+D** to deselect.
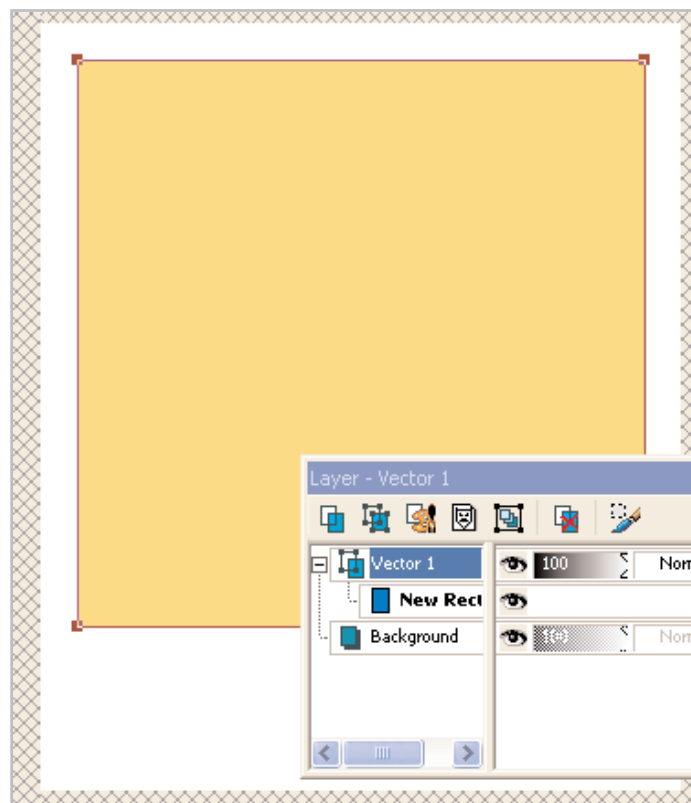
6. On the Layer Palette, click the entry for the Vector 1 layer, and delete it using the **Delete Layer** icon (second from right in the icon strip at the top of the Layer Palette). This will automatically make Raster 1 your active layer.
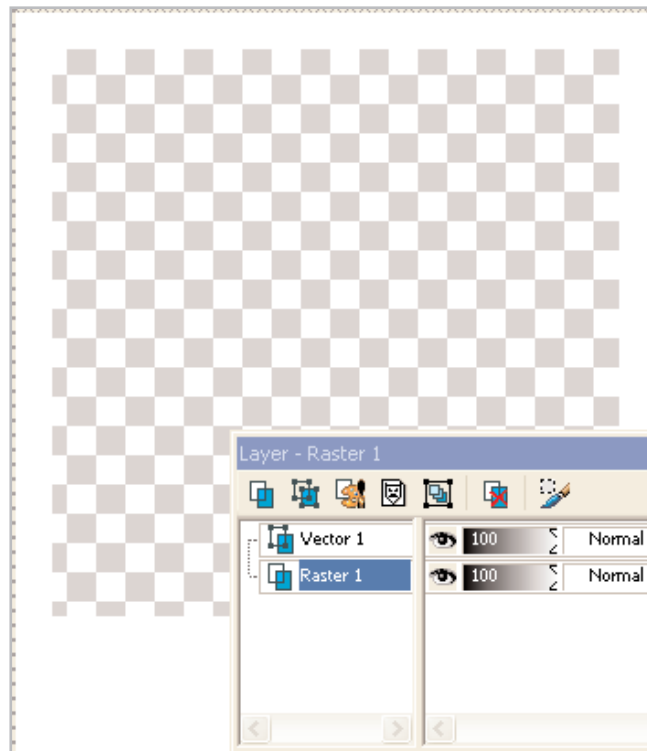

7. Choose **Effects > 3D Effects > Buttonize**. When the dialog opens, set the parameters as shown here, to add just a tiny bit of dimension to the frame.
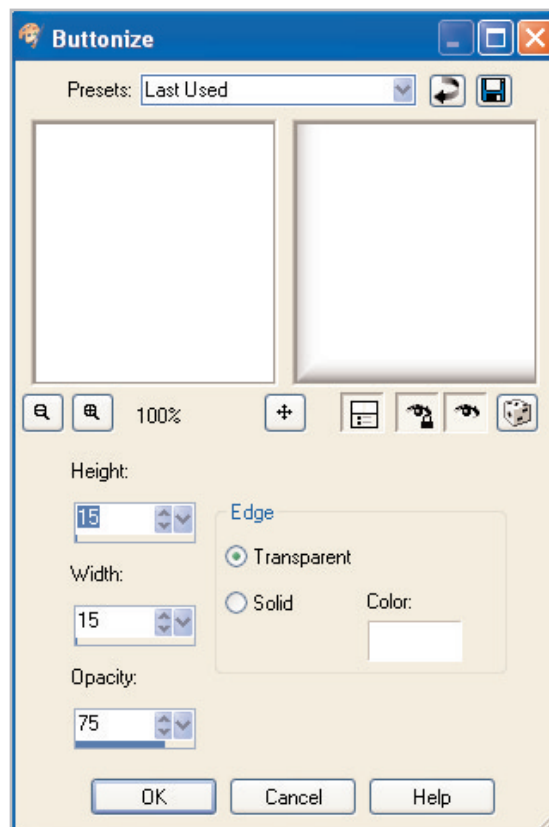
8. Your frame is now done. Choose **File > Export > Picture Frame**. When you are prompted to provide a name, type in **Polaroid**, and click **Save**.

Check to See if Your Frame Works

9. If you want to check to be sure it saved properly, choose **Image > Picture Frame**. When the dia log opens click the small black arrow just to the left of the phrase **Please choose a picture frame style** and a menu of available frames will fly out. Scroll down until you see your frame.
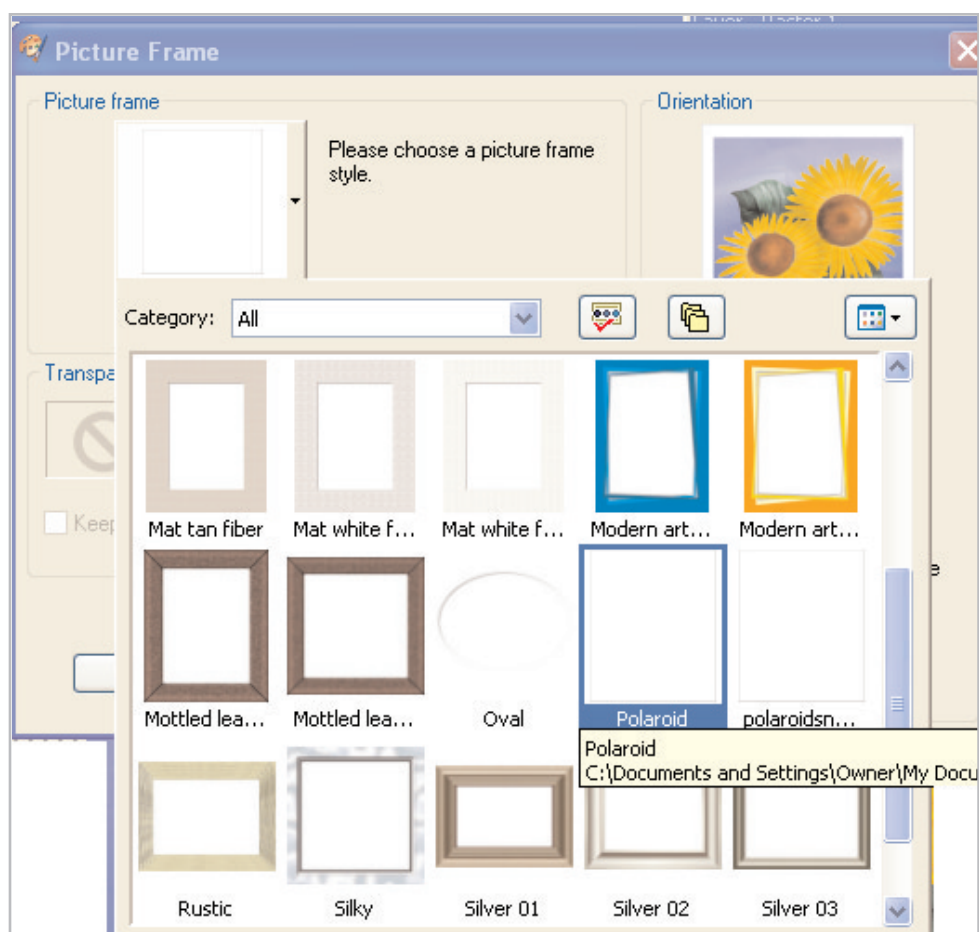
Use Your New Frame

I've included three small images, cropped to a square aspect ratio. They are named (not very originally) child1.jpg, child2.jpg, and child3.jpg. While our frame is of a size and resolution that should hold up without noticeable distortion for most 3-5 megapixel digital camera images, for the purpose of this exercise (and to keep download times reasonable) I have cropped them down to 225 x 225. After all, these are not pictures of your kids, so after you've completed the tutorial, how much use will you really have for them? If you are going to use your own photos, you should crop them to a square aspect ratio before you begin, and if you choose to leave the images much larger than 225 x 225, you will need to increase the canvas size.

10. You can close all other open documents now, and open a new 800 x 600 document with a black raster background.

11. Open child1. When the image opens, press **CTRL+C** to copy the image to the clipboard, and then close the image. Return to your new image with the black background and press **CTRL+L** to paste the child1 image as a new layer.

12. Press **M** to make the Move Tool active, and slide the image away from the center of the canvas.

13. Repeat Steps 11 and 12 with the other two images, pushing them apart from each other for easy access.

14. Look at your Layer Palette. The black background is its own layer, as are each of the photos.

15. Click the top layer, **Raster 3**. When the dialog opens, open the menu of available frames and locate your Polaroid frame. On the right side of the dialog, choose **Frame current layer** and **Frame outside of the image** and click **OK**. Now, look at your image. Paint Shop Pro 9 has created the frame, placed it on a new layer, and centered it perfectly on your image! How easy is that? Now look at the Layer Palette. The layer named Raster 3 Picture Frame is your active layer. Choose **Layer > Merge > Merge Down** to bond the frame to the image.

16. Repeat Step 15 for the other two images. Your image should look something like the one shown here.

17. Press **D** to make the Deform Tool active and arrange the images however you like. The center rocker arm will permit you to rotate them, and you can create an attractive pile off to the right of the canvas. If you have difficulty getting the Deform to "release" the layer, press **M** to switch to the Move Tool for a moment or click on a different layer in the Layer Palette. If you wish to change the stacking order as I did, you can drag and drop layers within the Layer Palette, shifting them into whatever configuration pleases you best. However you arrange them, don't completely obscure the wide bottom border on the Polaroids because we're going to use it in a minute.

18. On the Layer Palette, click the third icon from the left to create a new Art Media Layer. When the dialog box, click the **Canvas Texture** tab and choose the **Paper-contrast** texture (the menu works just like the Frames menu), make sure that the Enable Fill Color box is **unmarked**, and click **OK**. Drag it to the top of the stack.

19. Place a dark blue color in the foreground swatch. Choose the **Art Media Marker** Tool (it is nested with the other Art Media Tools on the lower half of the Tools toolbar) and write in some captions on the wide bottom borders of the photos. It's OK if they don't look perfect—that's sort-of the point. To make the captions look like they were handwritten with a ballpoint on a Polaroid.

20. On the Layer Palette, click the Background layer to make it active. Now choose the **Freehand Selection** Tool from the Tools toolbar. It is nested with the other selection tools on the Tools toolbar. The icon looks like a lasso. On the Tool Options Palette, set the following parameters:
    - Selection type: **Freehand**
    - Mode: **Replace**
    - Feather: **100**

21. Make a selection around the portion of the canvas covered by the photos. Precision isn't important; you have a feather of 100 set, so any selection you make will be very soft no matter what you do.

22. Place a bright color in the foreground swatch. I chose a bright green similar to the color of child3's sunglasses. Press **F** to make the Flood Fill Tool active. On the Tool Options palette, set the Match Mode to **None**, the Blend Mode to **Normal**, and the Opacity to **50%**. Click once (or twice, if it doesn't look bright enough) inside your selection. You should have a glow behind your photos now.

23. Then I just finished off the image with some white text and a Picture Tube image of a camera (found in the Science Tube that came with Paint Shop Pro 9) to create a slick- looking but simple promotional piece. BUT if I were a scrapbooker, I might have finished it off differently.

Next Steps:

Once you learn how to create your own picture frames, you can use the Preset Shapes Tools and Picture Tubes to design frames that suit every occasion you can dream up!