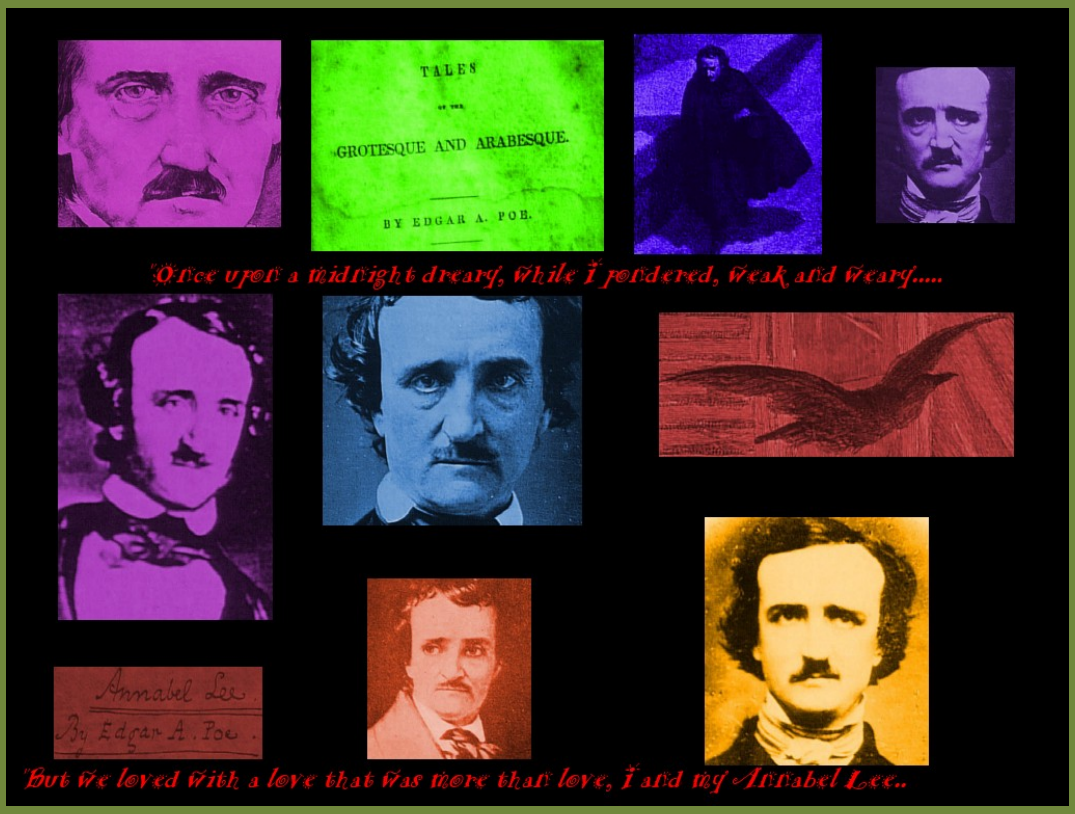
Creating Horror Backgrounds Using "Inside" Tips, Tricks, and Free Software



By Trex, webmaster
www.horrorstew.com

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Creating Horror Backgrounds Using "Inside" Tips, Tricks, and Free Software Part One: Locating the Software

Photo Mix

Capture Wiz

VLC Player

Irfan View

Thanks for purchasing Horror Stew's wallpaper e-course! Let's get started! There are four software programs and one hardware item you will need to create wallpapers. Below are the links to the download pages.

The hardware is a **DVD reader**. You pop in your horror DVD and you can watch it on your computer. Assuming you have that (most computers now come with a DVD reader installed), we are ready for the software.

The flagship program is **Photo Mix**. This is the program that creates your wallpaper! Download Free Trial Version Here. Now, here's the link to actually purchase **Photo Mix** (costs $29.00) which I've included in case you later on decide as your 30 day trial version runs out that you want it: Buy Photo Mix. The trial version has annoying pop-ups sometimes that encourage you to buy as you work through your free trial. It is bothersome, but tolerable!

The next program is **Capture Wiz Pro**, a cool little capture program that will **capture images** from DVD movies or anything on the internet for that matter! It is a very simple, easy to use little unit. This is the second program with a 30 day free trial with bothersome pop-ups during the limited trial run, and the only other one you might want to purchase. (It's $29.95.) Download Free Trial Version Here.

The next program is the **Video Lan Free Player (aka The VLC Player)**. This is the viewer that you watch your horror movies on as well as capturing pictures from it to use in your **Photo Mix** wallpapers! This is where I get all of my great horror images that's on my site www.horrorstew.com. Free! I love that word! Download Free Video Lan Player Here.

Lastly, the program I use to crop, colorize, and manipulate photos to get them ready for my wallpapers is the free **IrfanView program**. Download Free Irfan View. That's the software you'll need to make your own wallpapers! You might be wondering, "WHY do I need so many programs to make wallpaper!?" Well, I sought these out because I didn't want to pay $650.00 dollars for **Photoshop**! My pockets just aren't that deep!

I just want you to know that you don't have to learn every little thing or become a master

of each of these programs (unless you want to). I didn't and don't plan to. I use what I want to use from them to create my wallpapers.

OK....install these programs on your computer, and then come back here for some valuable set-up info for the **Video Lan Player**.

Setting Up the Video Lan Player

This is important! When using the very easy to use **Capture Wiz Pro** on media players, you may find that you get a blank capture. That means as you watch your horror movie and see an image you want for your wallpaper, after you've captured it and saved it to "My Pictures", you find that the picture you thought you saved is just a black square saved in "My Pictures"! Talk about annoying! Here's how to fix this typical problem: Fixing The Dreaded "Blank Screen" With These Step-By-Step Instructions. I had to do this myself after some digging for help info!

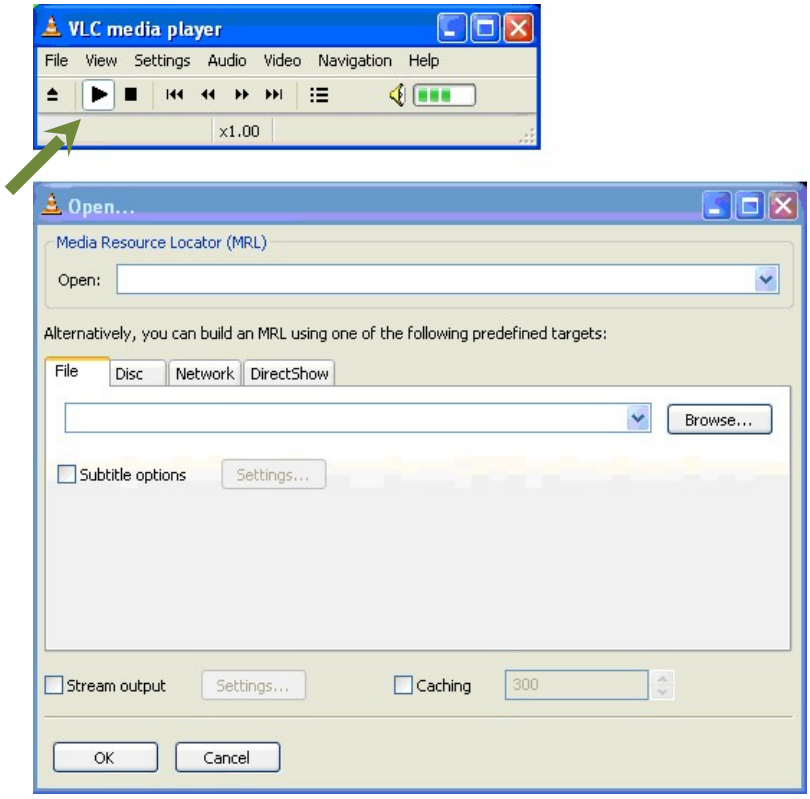
Now that you have all of your software installed, it's time to move on to **Part 2: Capturing Images Using the VLC Video Player and Capture Wiz**!

Creating Horror Backgrounds Using "Inside" Tips, Tricks, and Free Software Part Two: Capturing Images Using the VLC Video Player and Capture Wiz

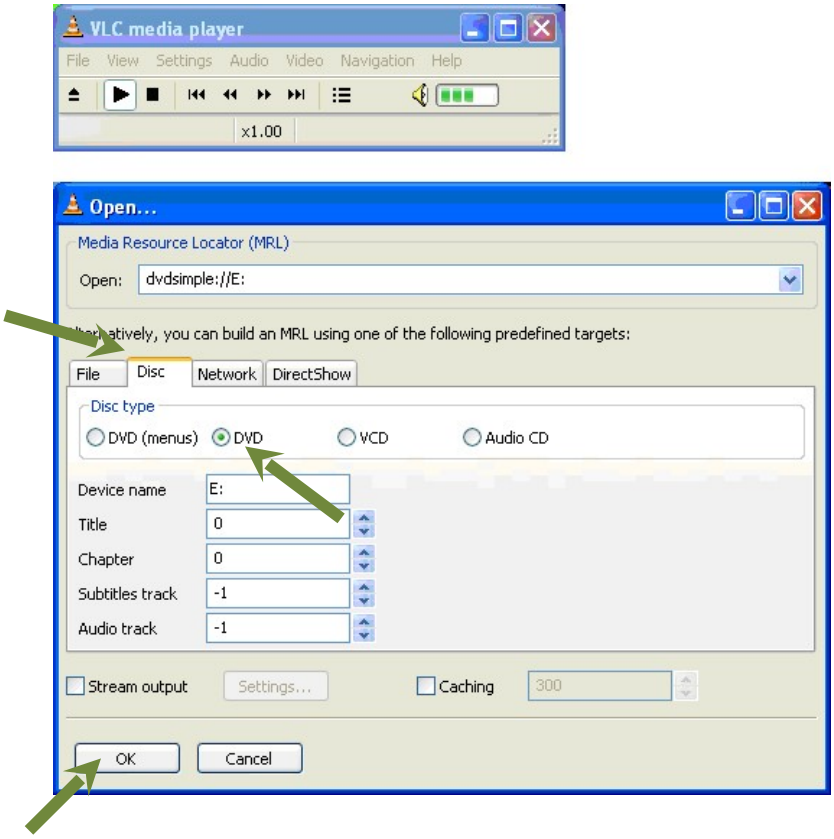
Ok, now let's capture some images from a movie using your free VLC video player. Click on the icon for the VLC player that's on your desktop!

Now you'll see the control bar with play, stop, fast forward, etc. for the player.

When you hit play, however, this **Open** box will come up.

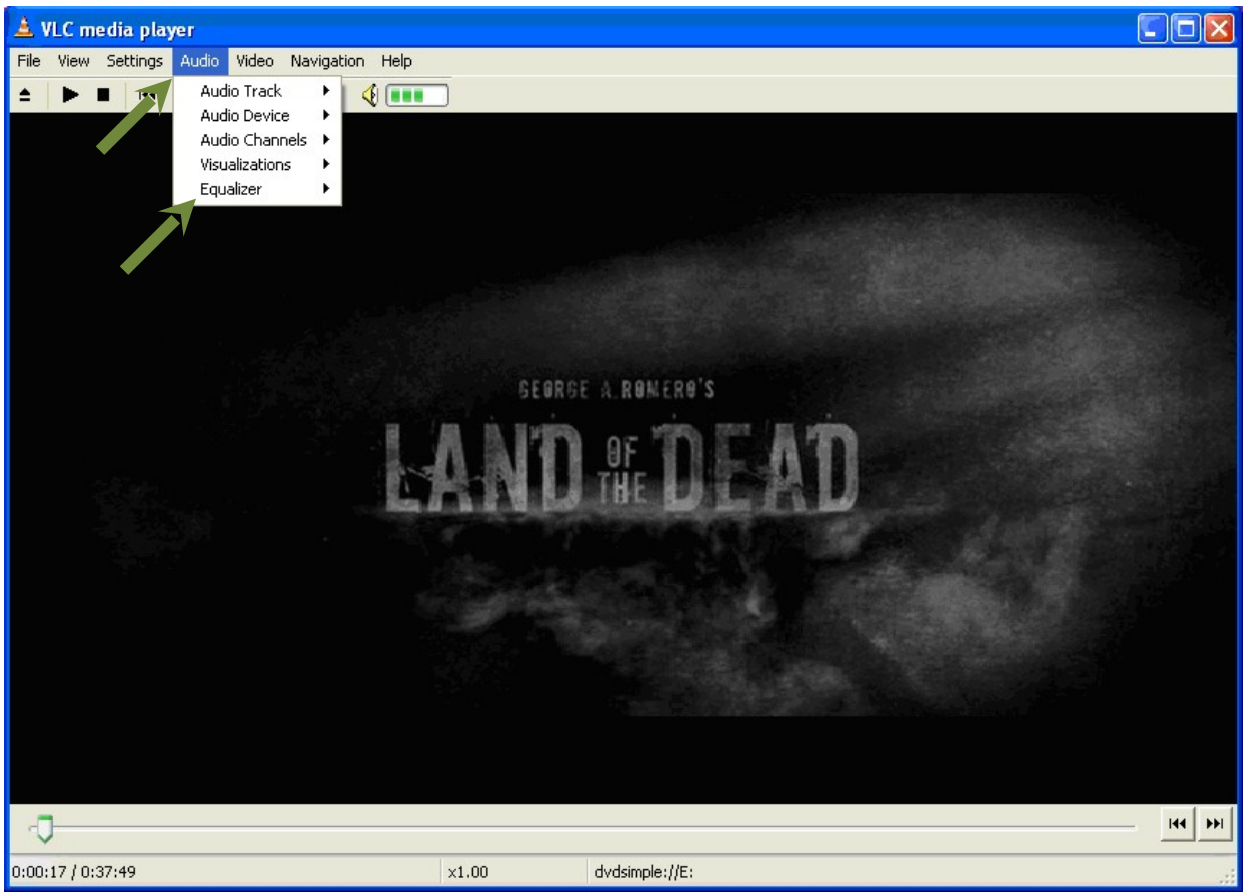


Click the **Disc** tab.

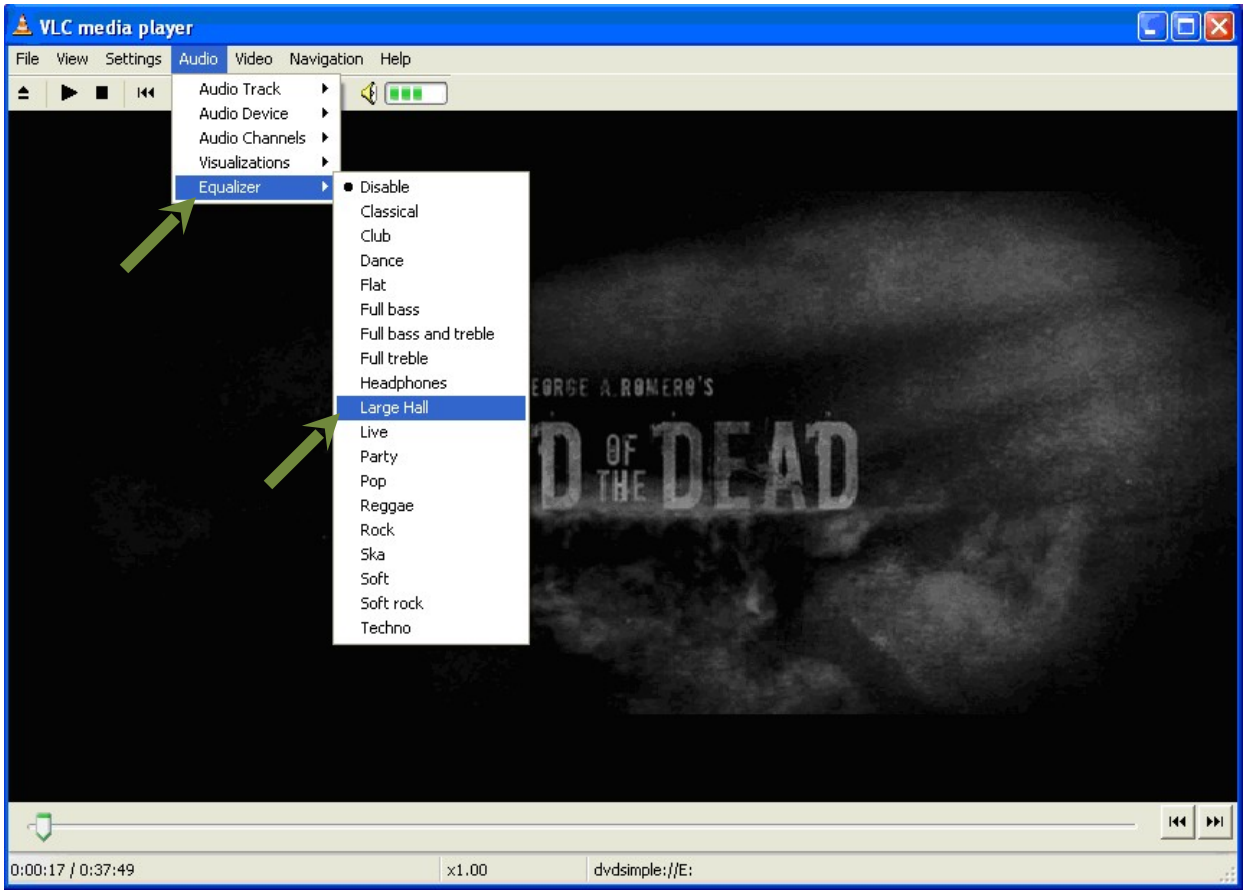


Under the **Disc Type**, you'll see the **DVD (menus)** circle filled in, change that to **DVD** as shown here, and then click OK. Now your movie will start. You're ready to capture some images!

Want to turn the sound up? Go to **Audio**.....

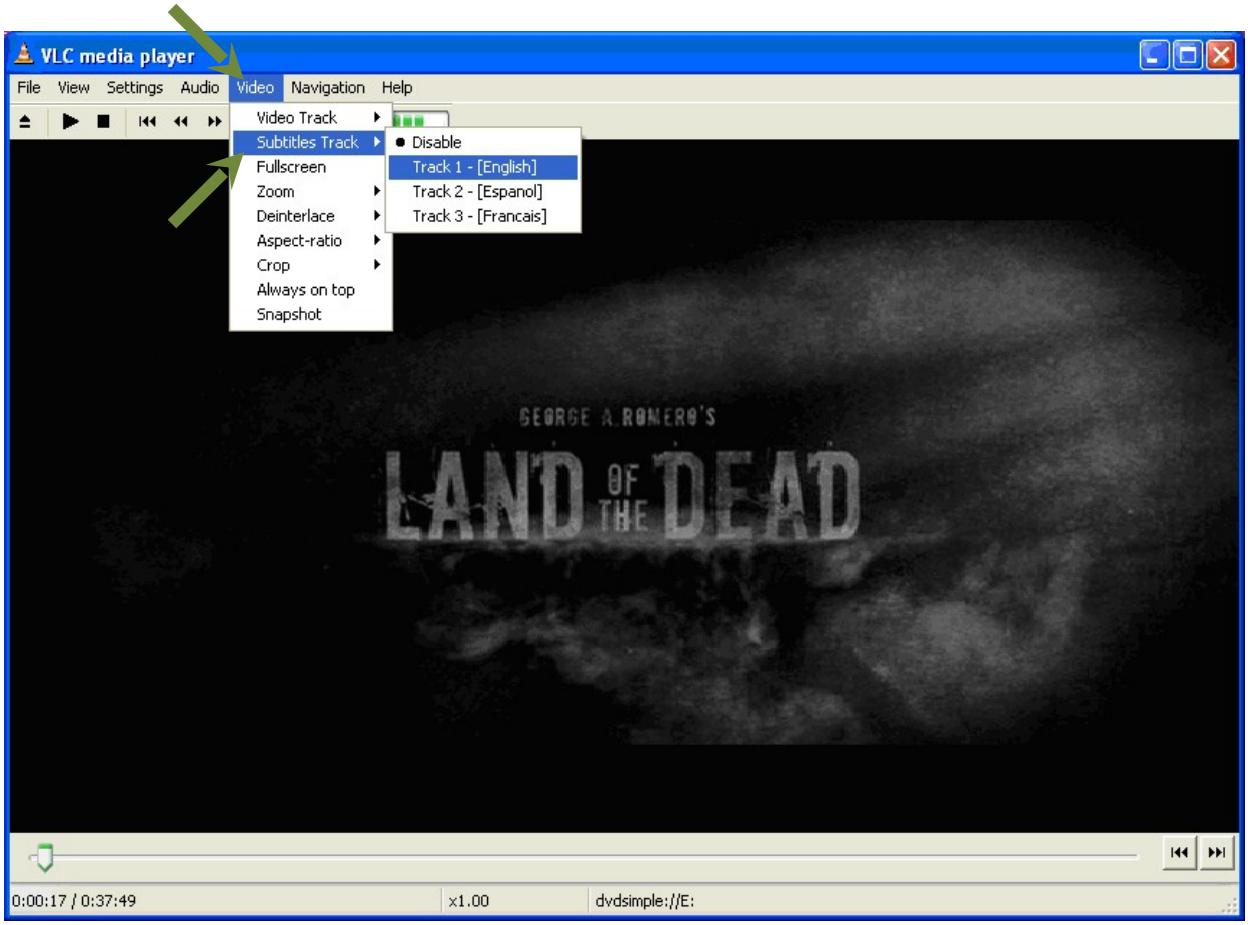


……and click **Equalizer**……



……and pick **Large Hall**. In fact, mess around with the different sound types there. Some movies can use the boost in sound quality.

Want subtitles? Go to **Video**, click on **Subtitles Track**, and pick whatever language is available for your situation.

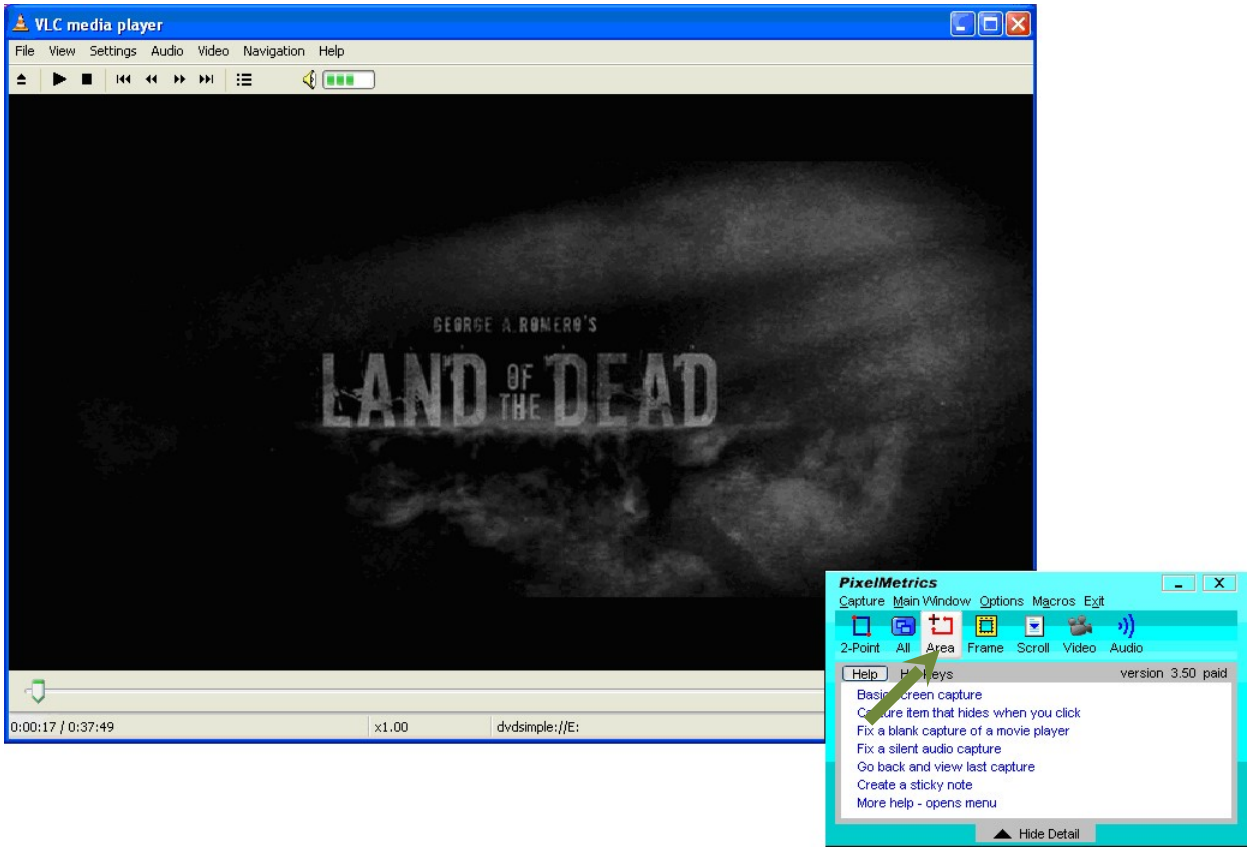


*If the movie doesn't offer subtitles, you won't see an option to pick!

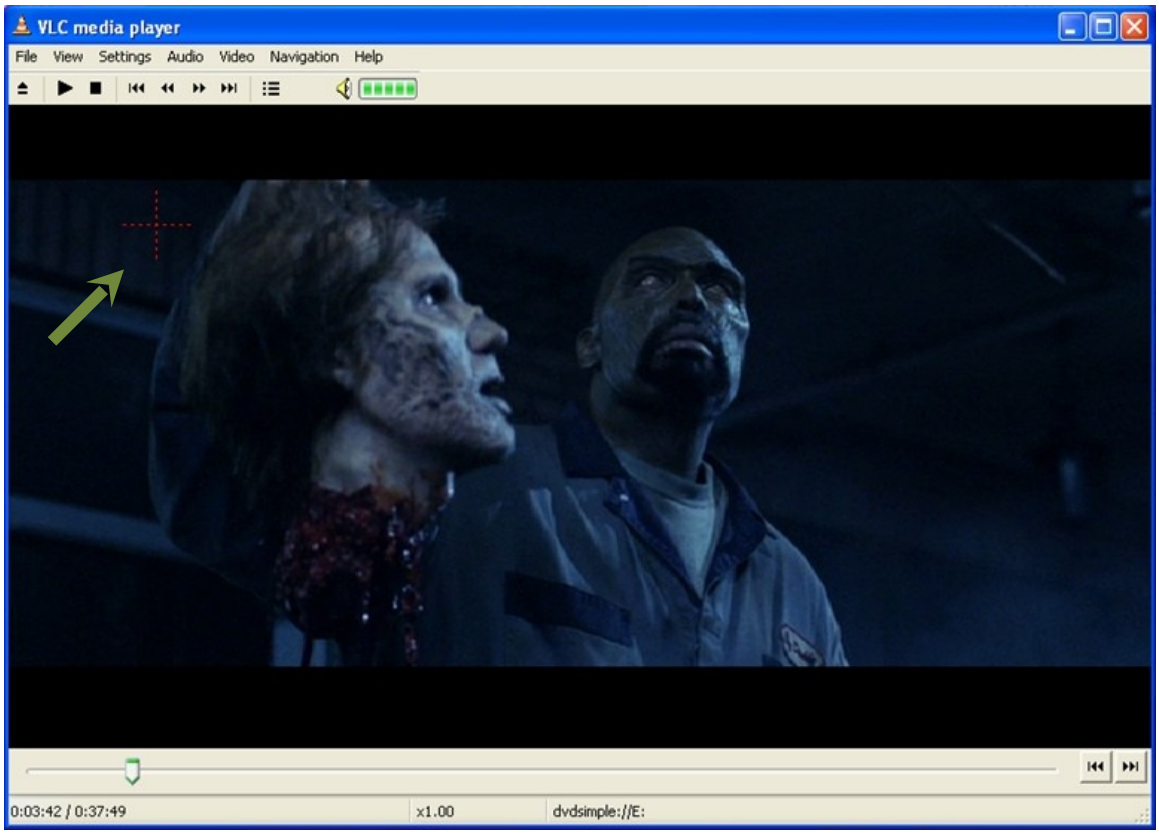
Tip: Try using some good quality headphones when watching your movie. I do…you wouldn't believe the difference in what you can pick up and hear!

Now you should be ready to capture images off of the **VLC Video Player** using your capture device **Capture Wiz**! As you can see below, I have my **Capture Wiz Tool Bar** docked at the right side of my desktop, but you can put it anywhere the makes it easier for you to use. I only have a sliver of it showing but when I touch it with my mouse pointer; it pops out, showing the full range of tools available on it. Then when I'm done, it pops back out of my way. The button I use the most is the **Area** button (highlighted below). It's basically a nice cropping tool in that, after you capture your image with it, you can move the red lines around and manipulate the image, getting exactly what you want! You are the artist; you decide exactly what you want in your wallpaper based on the images that you capture and cut.

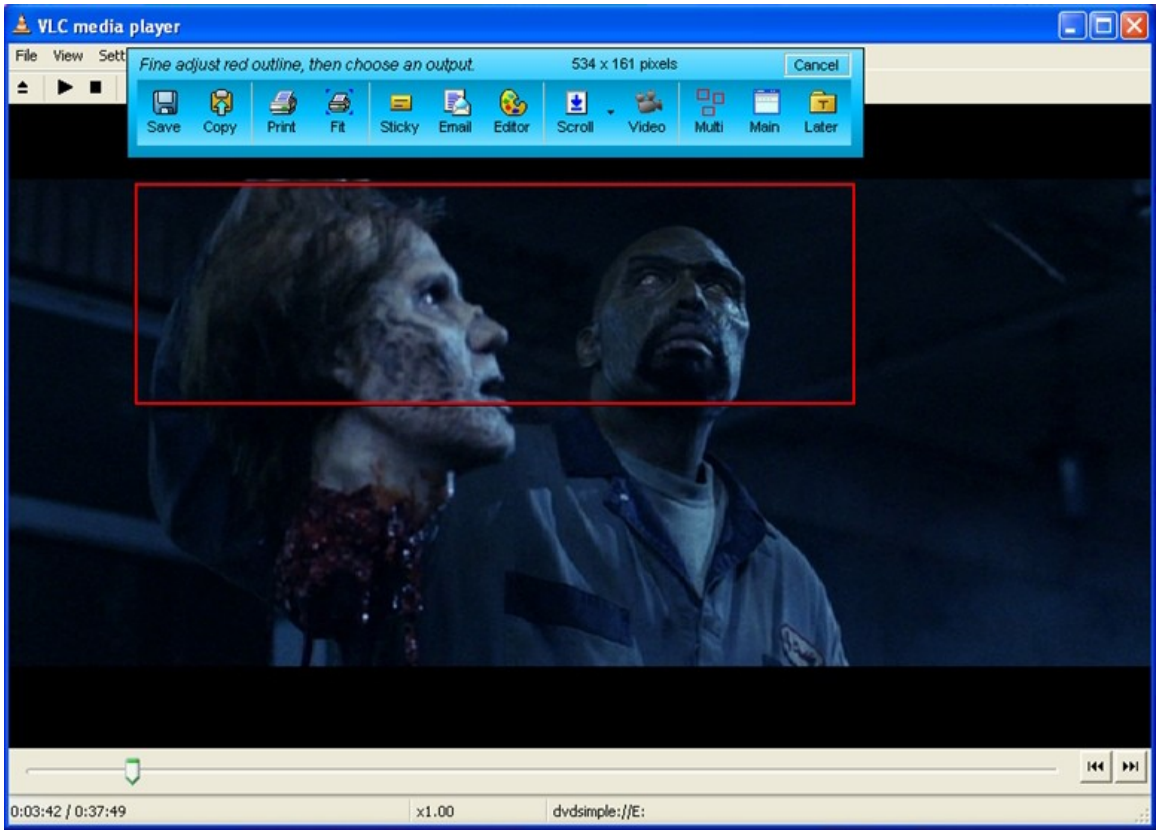
Let's try to capture an image. As you watch your movie, you see a scene that you want. **Pause** the movie at that scene. If you overshoot the image, just move the **VLC's slider bar** (at the bottom of the player) back a little to get to the scene you want. You'll get better at this as you go! Alright, now you have your movie **paused** at your image. Click the **Area** tab on your **Capture Wiz**……



……and you'll see a red plus sign that you can move around with your mouse.



That's what you'll use to frame your picture with. Place the red plus sign where you want to start, left click the mouse button while holding it down, and then complete the action by framing the picture with the red lines.


VLC media player
File View Sett
Fine adjust red outline, then choose an output.
534 x 161 pixels
Cancel
Save Copy Print Fit Sticky Email Editor Scroll Video Multi Main Later
0:03:42 / 0:37:49
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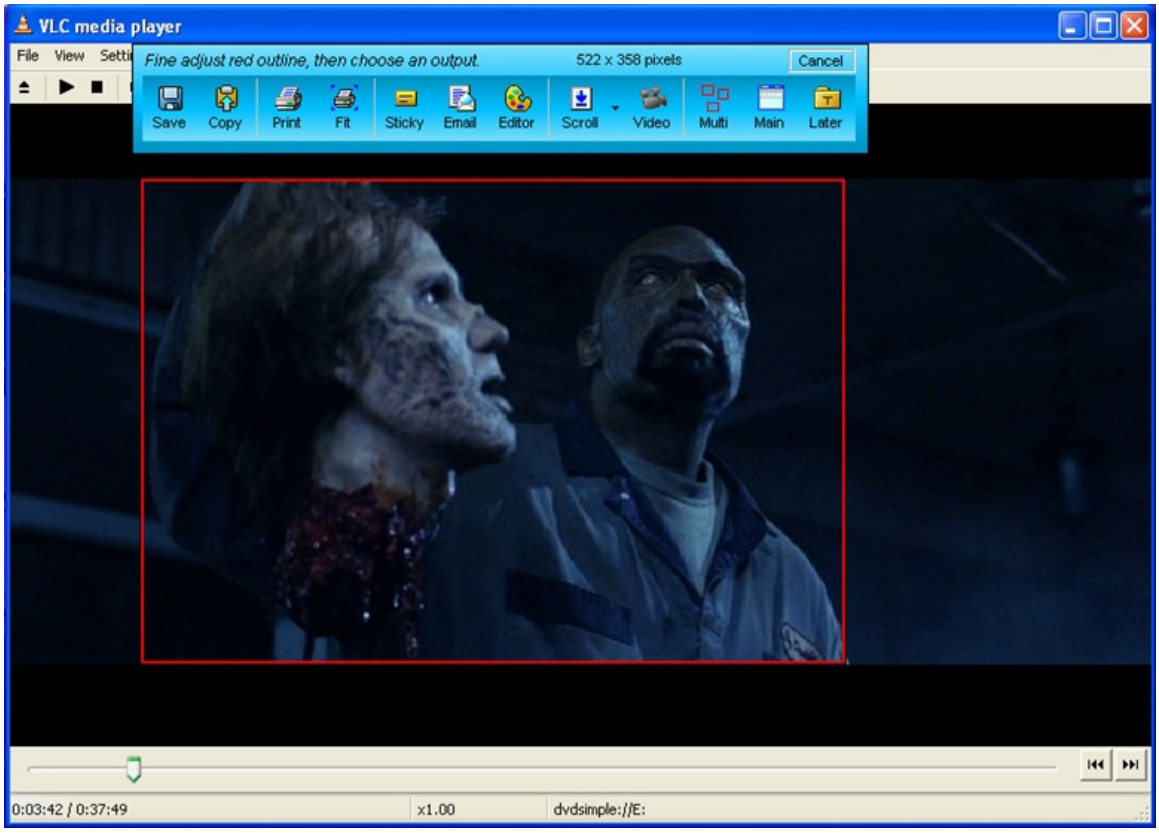
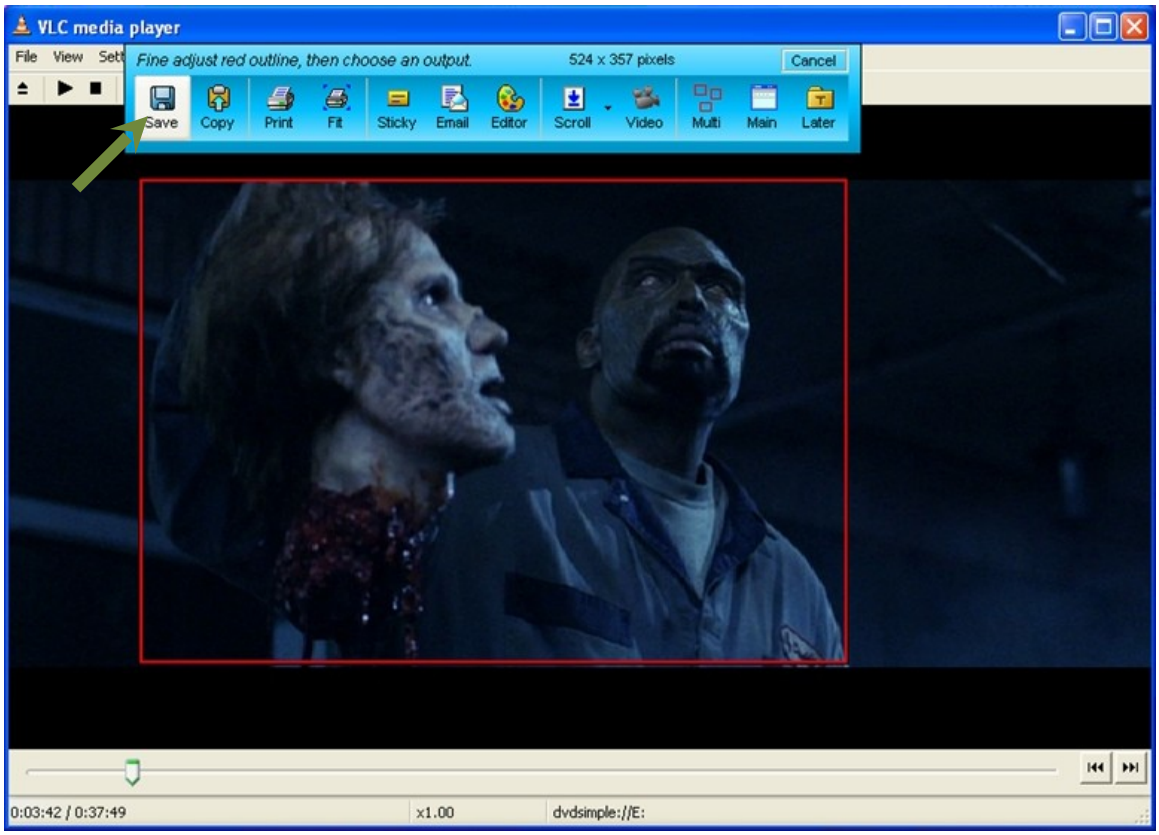
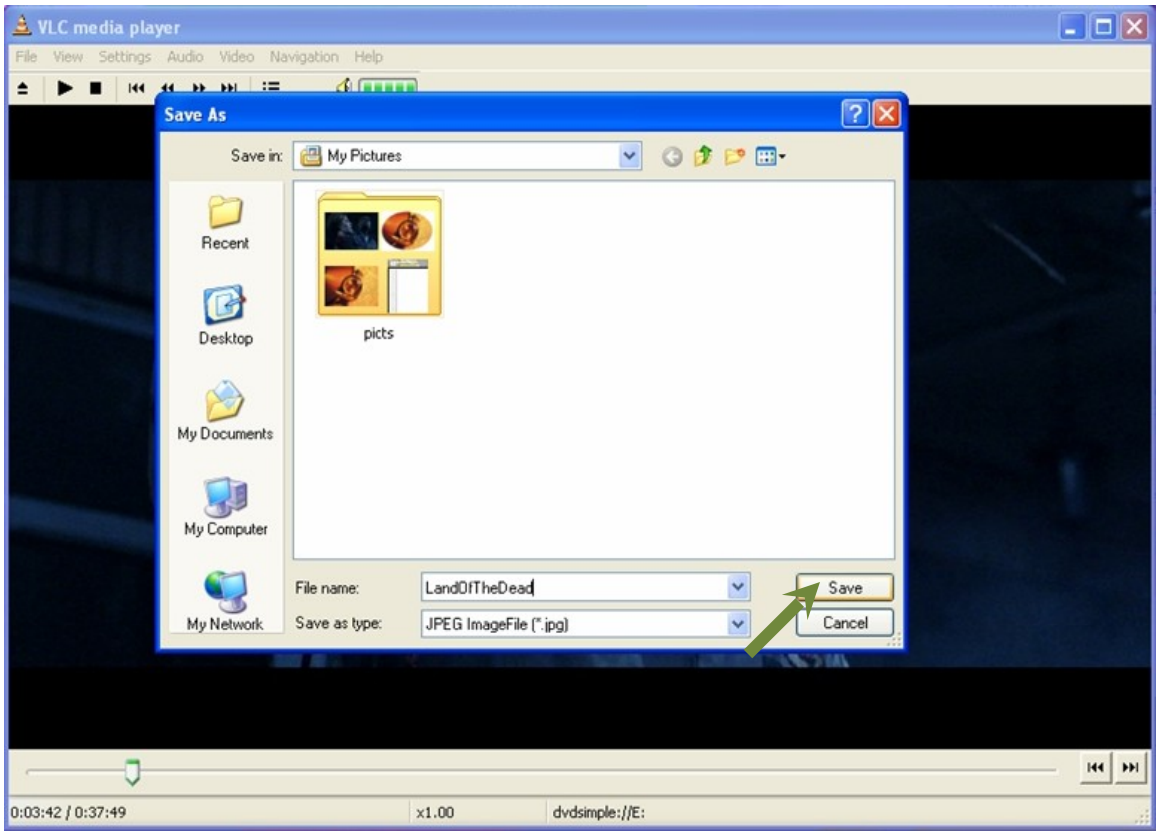
dvdsimple://E:


VLC media player
File View Sett
Fine adjust red outline, then choose an output.
522 x 358 pixels
Cancel
Save Copy Print Fit Sticky Email Editor Scroll Video Multi Main Later
0:03:42 / 0:37:49
x1.00
dvdsimple://E:

Don't worry if you mess up, because you can move the lines in or out with your mouse, fine tuning the picture the way you want it to appear. Want to redo the whole mess (if you make one!)? Simply **right click outside of the VLC** player's screen to start over. When you get what you want, **Save** it to **My Pictures**.





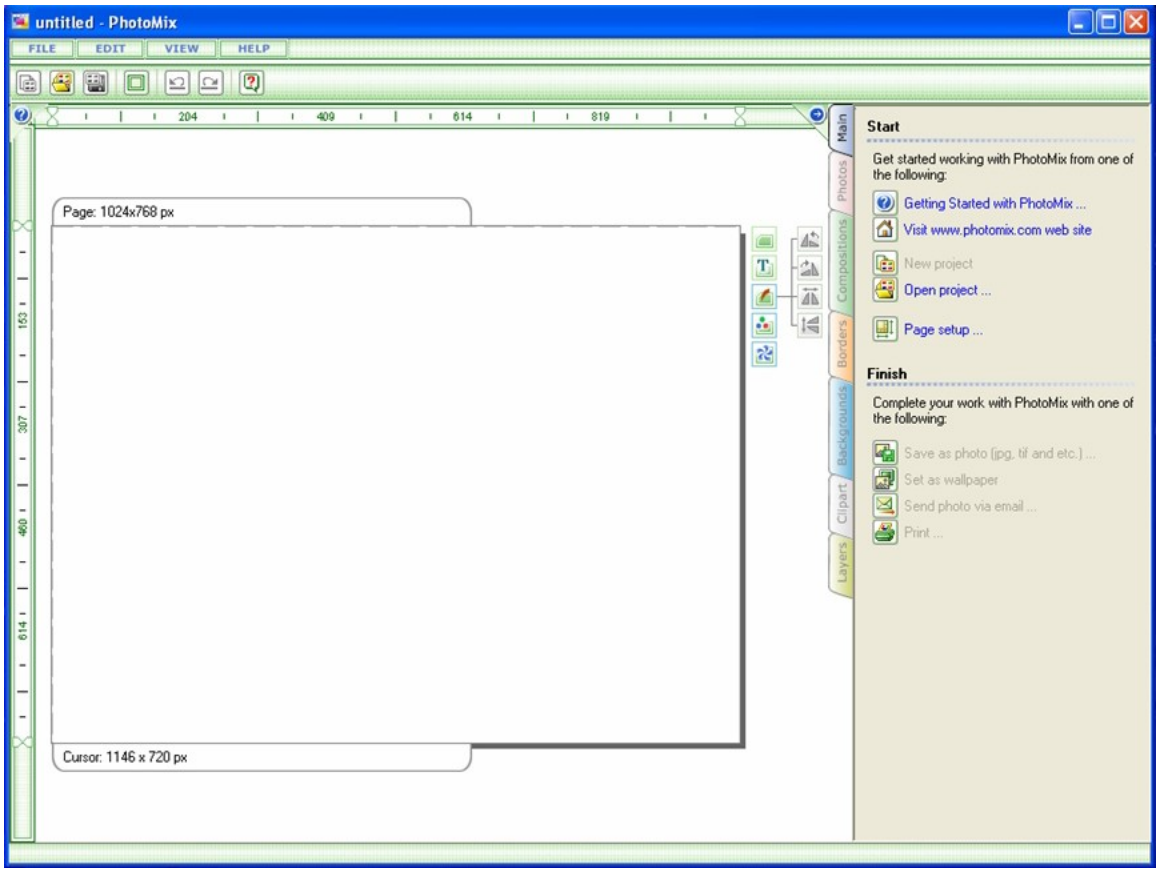
Later on, you'll import these pictures into **Irfan View** if you want to resize or lighten them up or **Photo Mix** when you are ready to make wallpapers! That's it! You've successfully captured images off of the **VLC Video player**! Now you can also use the **Capture Wiz** to capture any images off of the internet, but for copyright purposes I have to say you can't legally use them (wink!). You'll find that **Capture Wiz** is a very handy program for any project you have going where you need images. I use it a lot!

Ready to move on? Let's make a wallpaper using **Photo Mix**! Move on to **Part Three: Using Photo Mix To Create Your Wallpaper**

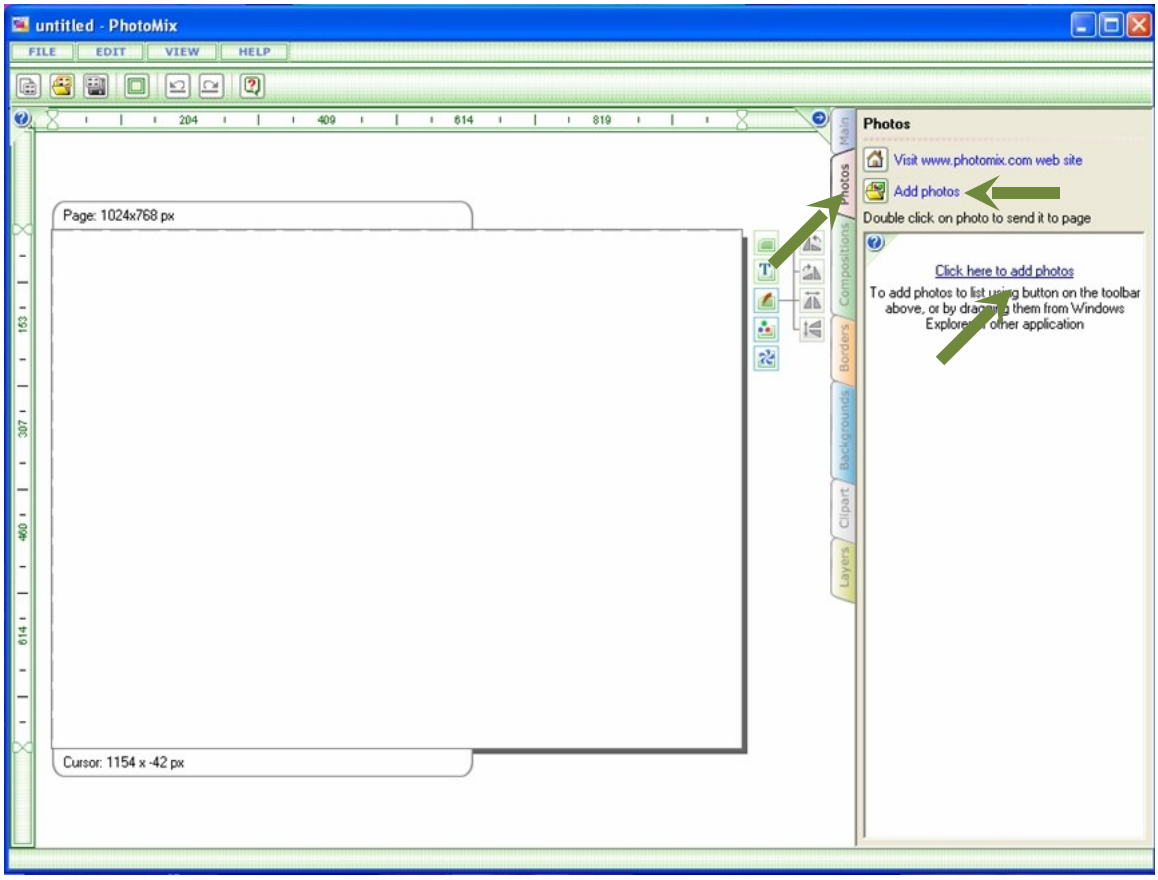
Creating Horror Backgrounds Using "Inside" Tips, Tricks, and Free Software Part Three: Using Photo Mix To Create Your Wallpaper

Adding Photos To Photo Mix

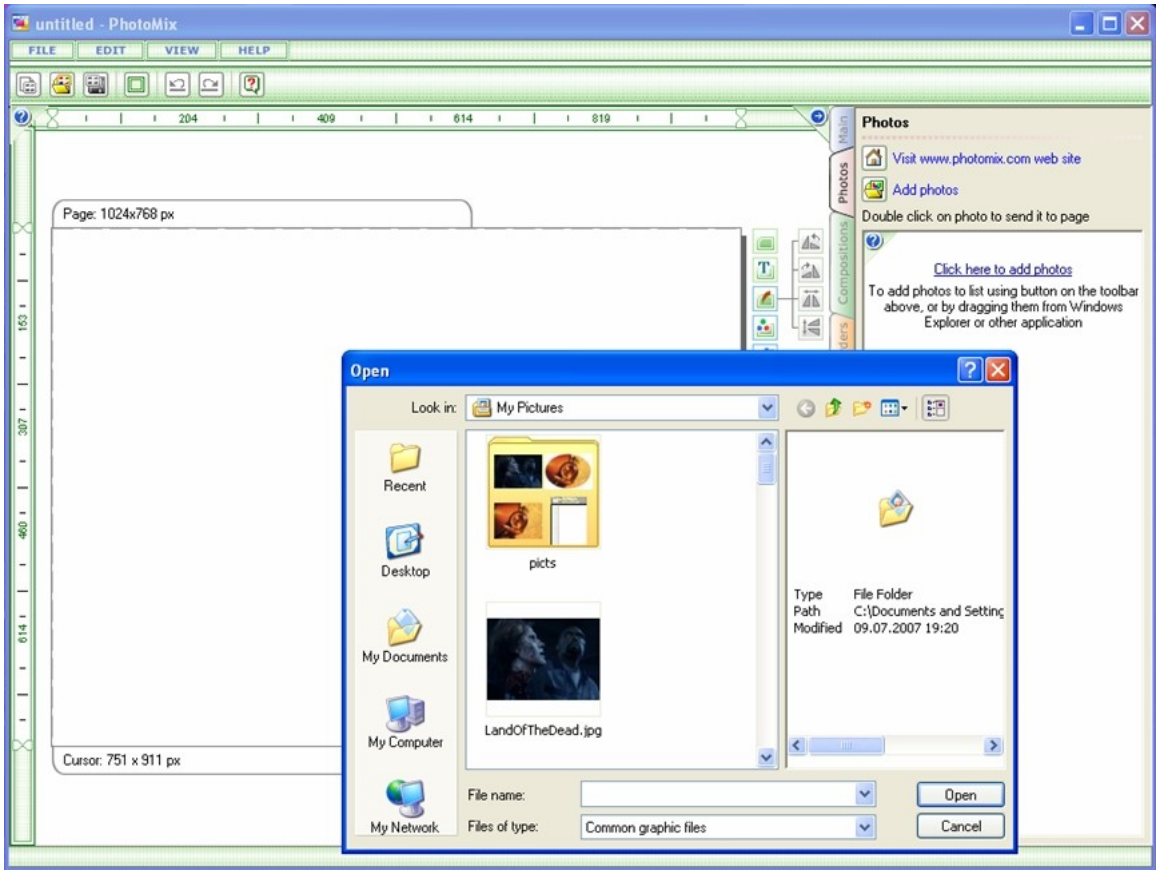
Click on your **Photo Mix** icon to open the program. It will look like this:



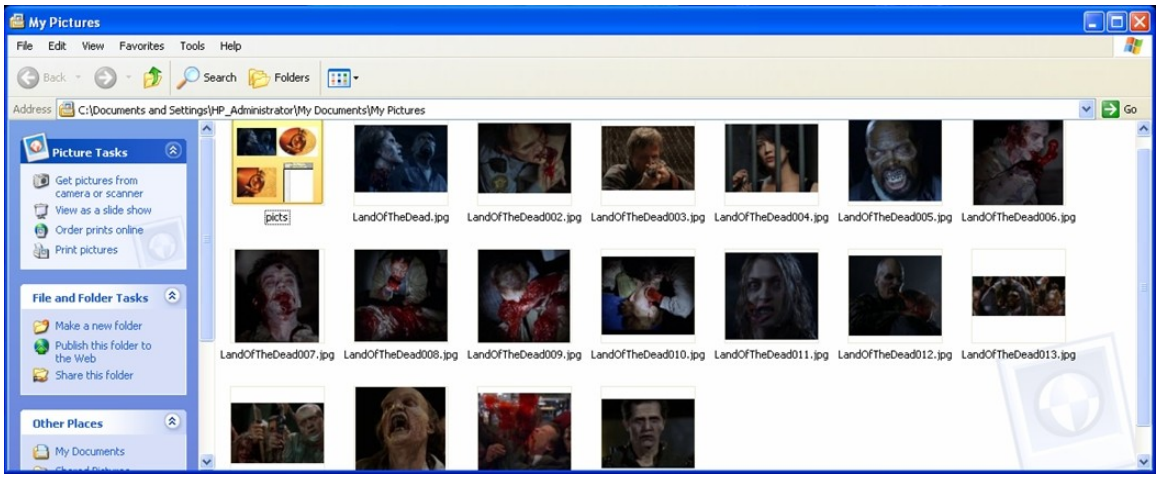
The next thing you'll want to do is get the pictures that you've captured from the **VLC player** into the **Photo Mix** program, which is easy! Pick the light pink **Photos** tab.



On the right margin of **Photo Mix** you can click **Add Photos** or **Click Here To Add Photos**, both of which will bring up your **My Pictures** box. This should be where you've stored all of your captured pictures. As you can see below, I've been capturing pictures from the George Romero movie, **Land Of The Dead**!

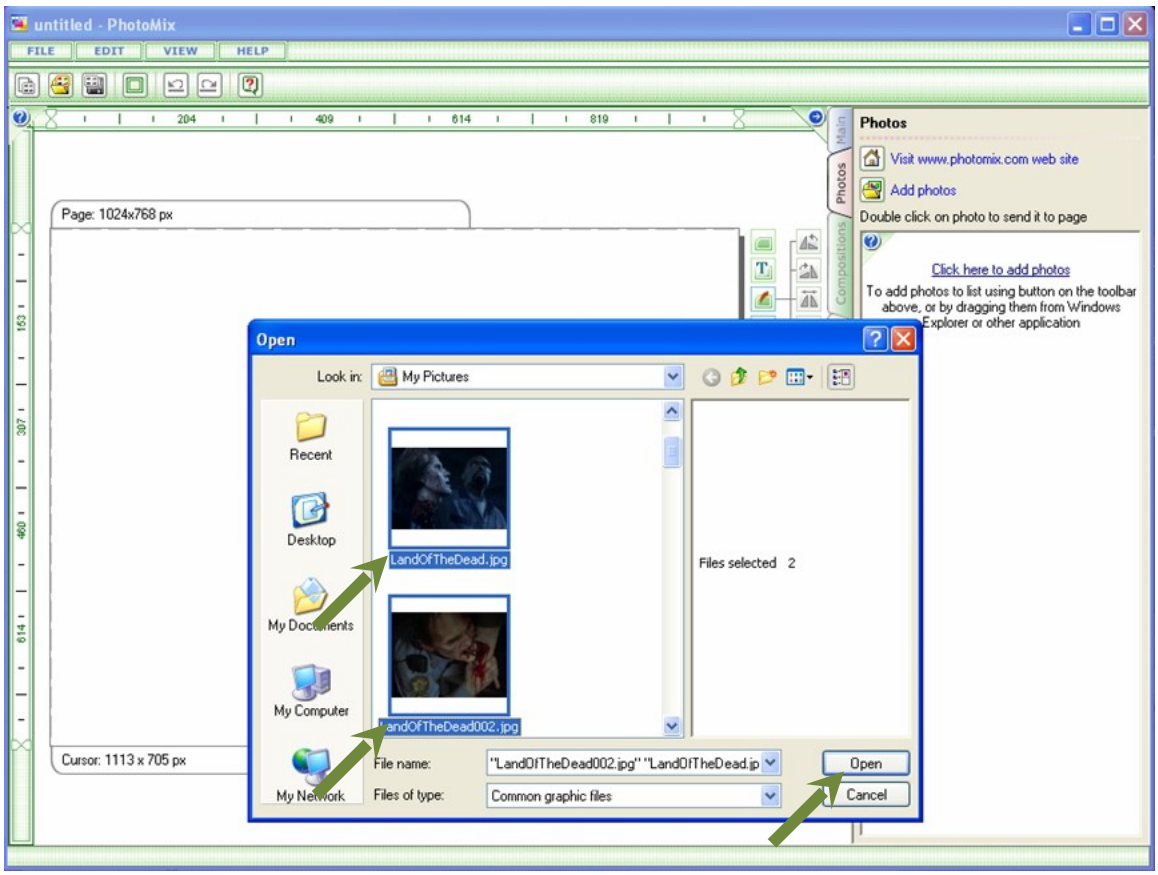


This is typical Romero zombie gore which makes for a sick, gory, wallpaper! I've captured 17 images, more then enough to make a wallpaper, or a few wallpapers. Here they all are in **My Pictures**:

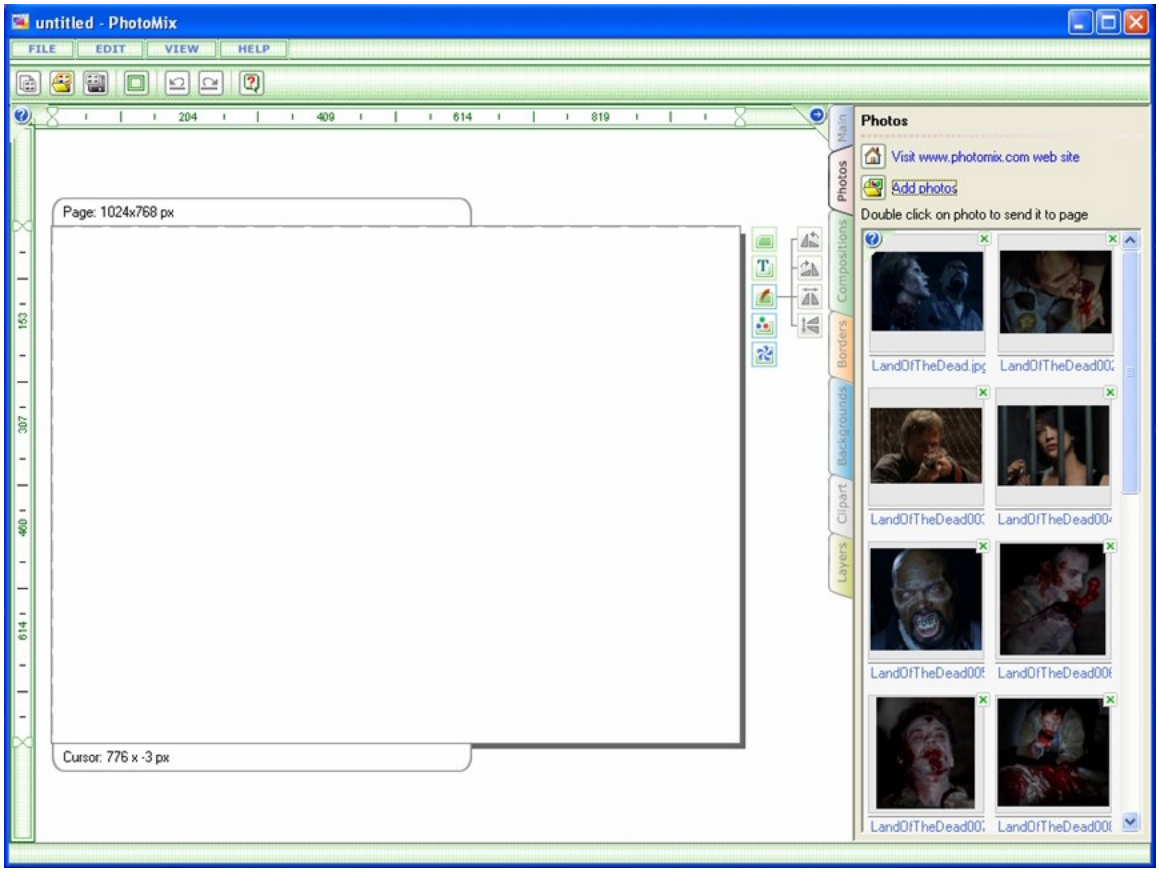


Here's how to add all of your photos to **Photo Mix**: Hold down the **Control** button on your keyboard and click on each photo in your **My Pictures** box. You'll see the photos

framed in blue.

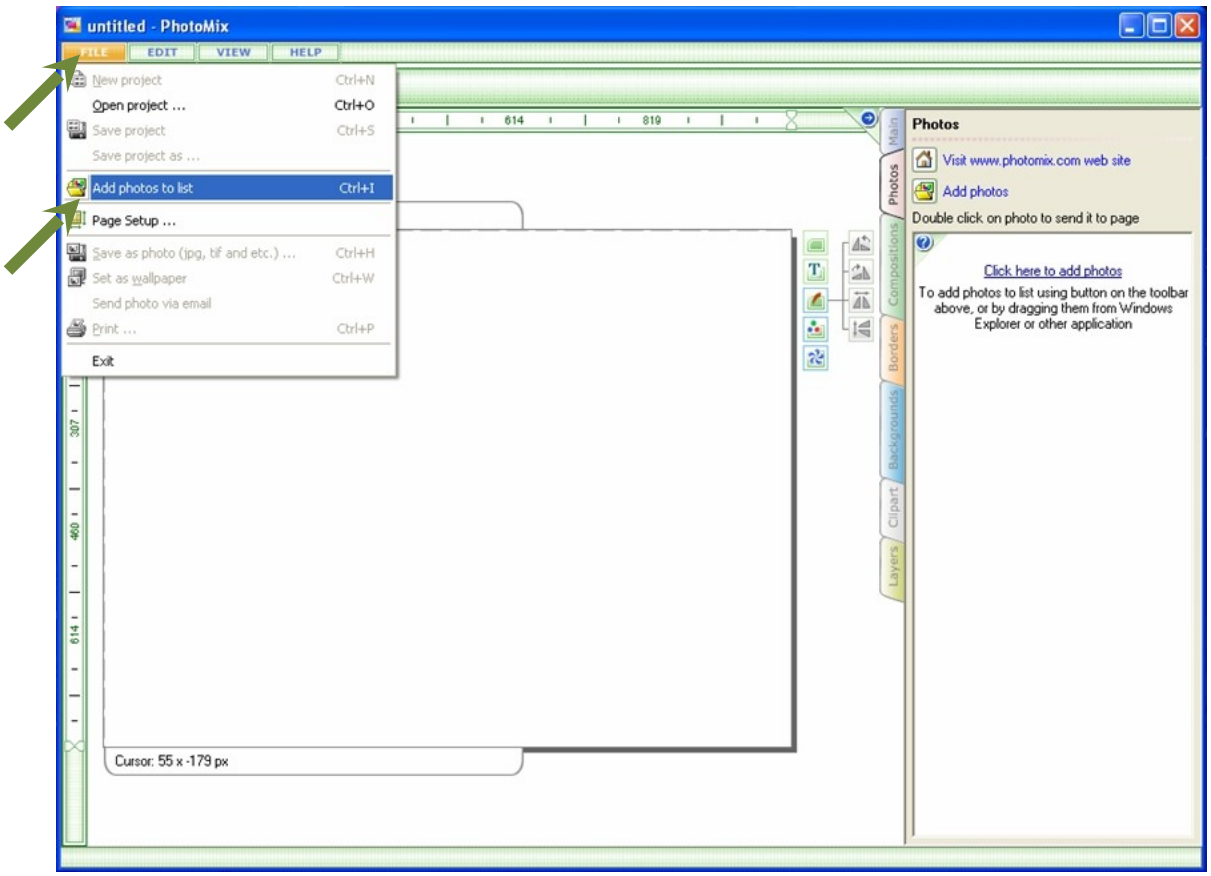


Then click the **Open** tab in the **My Pictures** and it will transfer them to your **Photo Mix** program. You'll see them appear on the right……



……margin in your **Photo Mix**.

Another way to add photos is to go to **File**, and click **Add Photos To List**……

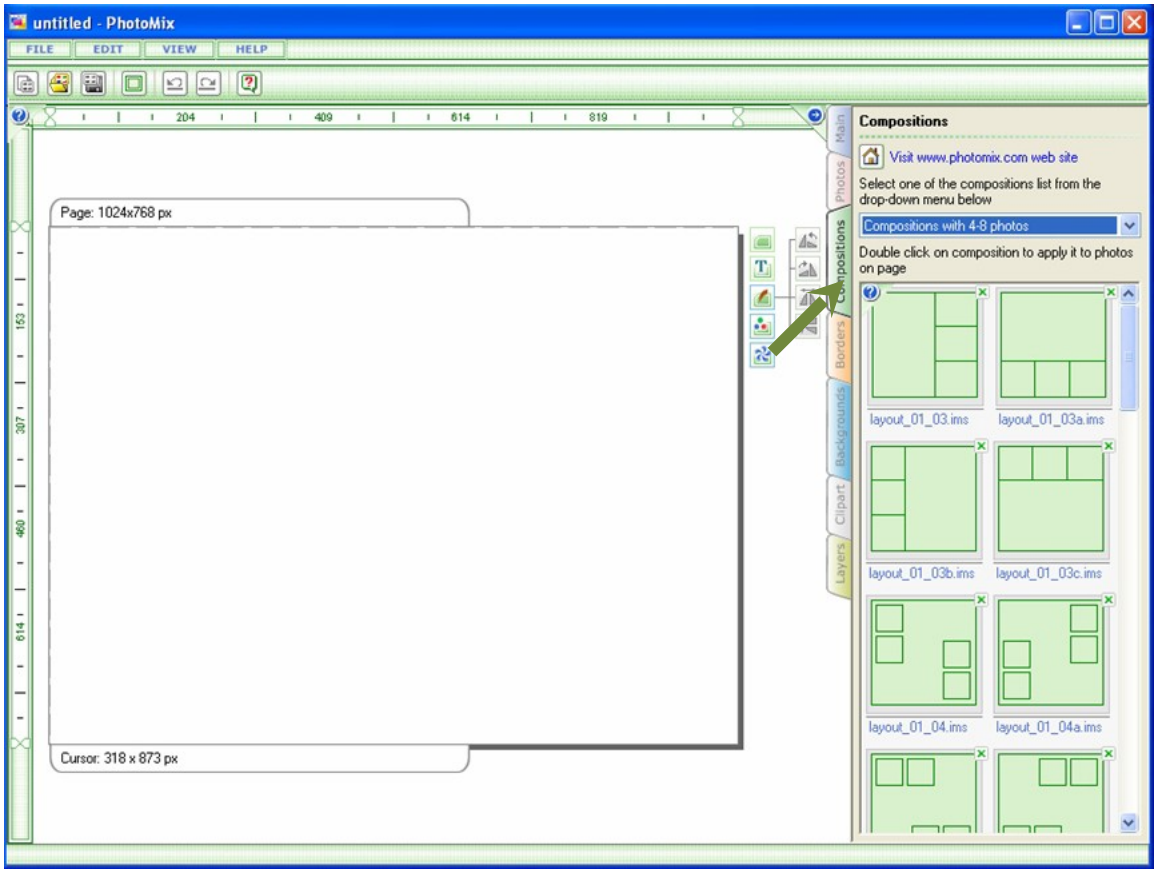


Again, your **My Pictures** will pop up again. Highlight and add! That's it for adding photos! Let's say you want to **delete** a picture from your group that you don't want to use.

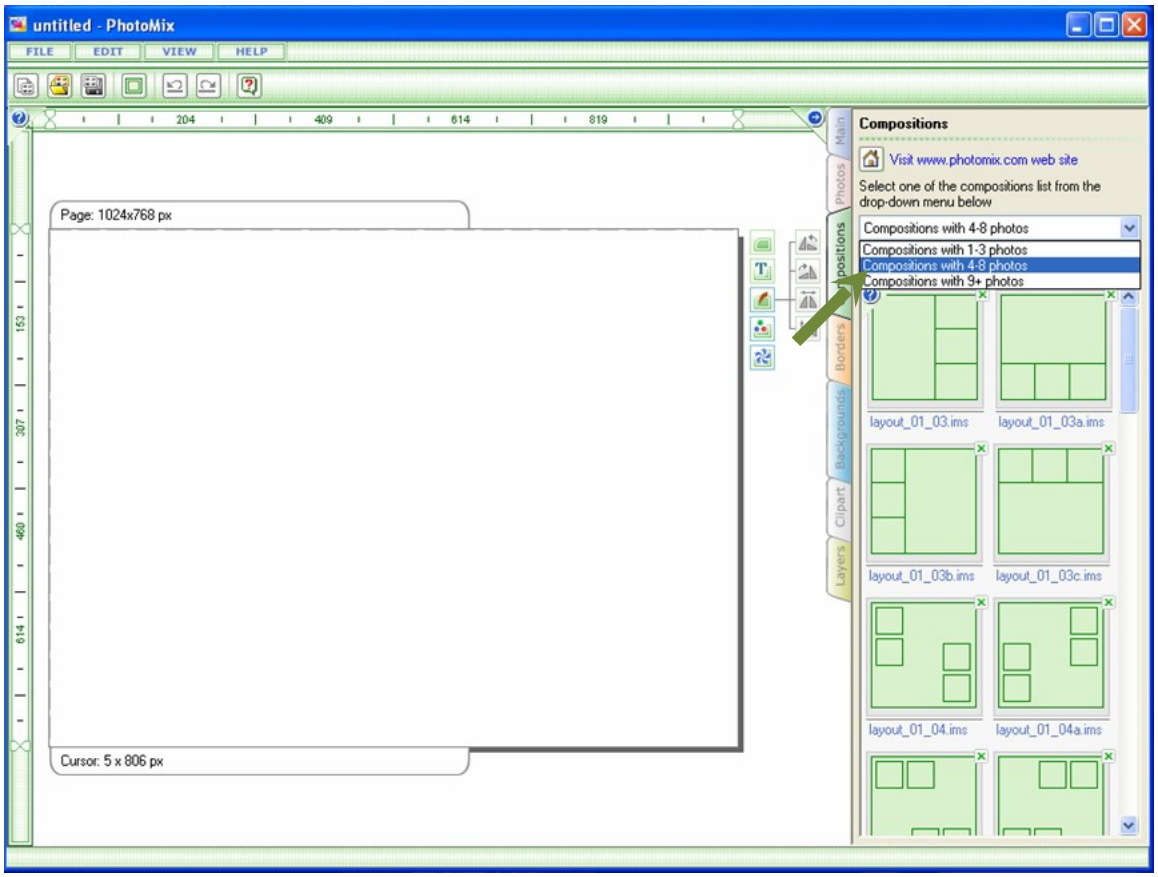
Click on the little **X** at the upper right hand of the photo and it will be dumped.

Picking A Layout

Photo Mix supplies layouts (templates) for your wallpaper ranging from 1 to 9 photos. When you click on the **Compositions** tab, you'll see some formatted layouts in light green.

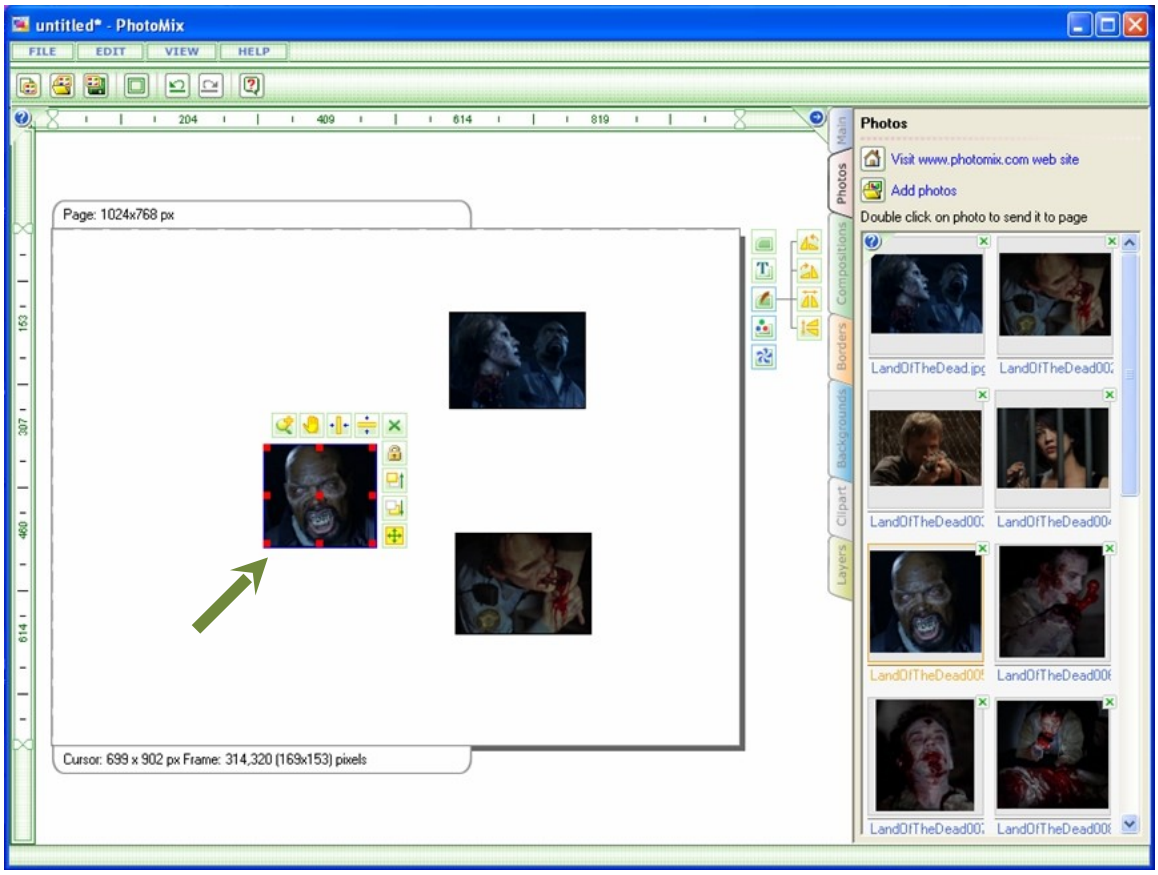


This picture shows a layout for 4-8 photos. As you scroll down, you'll see more layouts that accept more pictures! The cool thing about **Photo Mix** is that you are the artist. You decide based on your opinion on what's cool about that particular movie, and then put it in there! Now, if you'd like other layouts for more pictures, hit the drop down tab and you'll see the other choices.

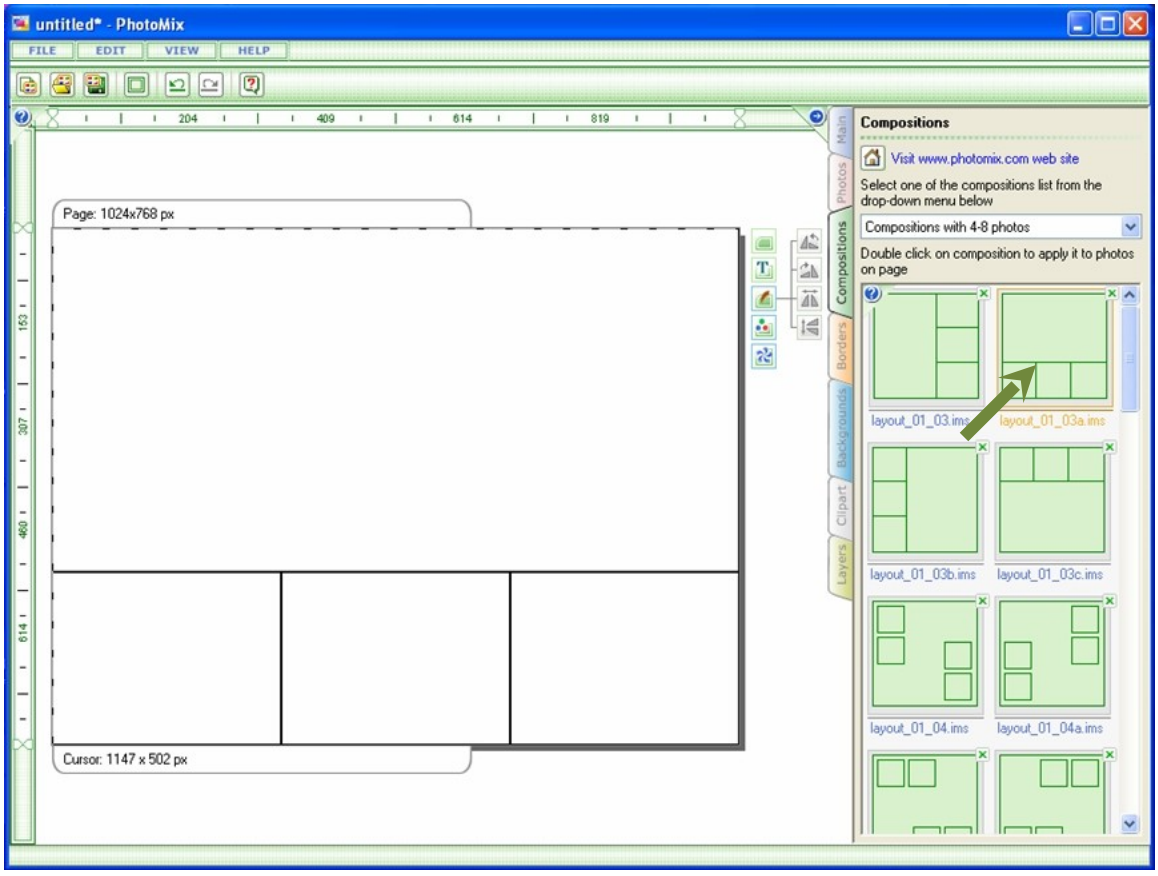


Anyway, that's just one way to make these wallpapers, that is, with the standard layout choices. Another way I like doing them is what I call the **Free Form** way. That's taking the pictures and dragging and dropping them onto your wallpaper canvas, like so……

*Drag and Drop means clicking on the photo and holding the left mouse button down on it while moving the photo to the area you want it to be in and letting go of the button, placing it there!



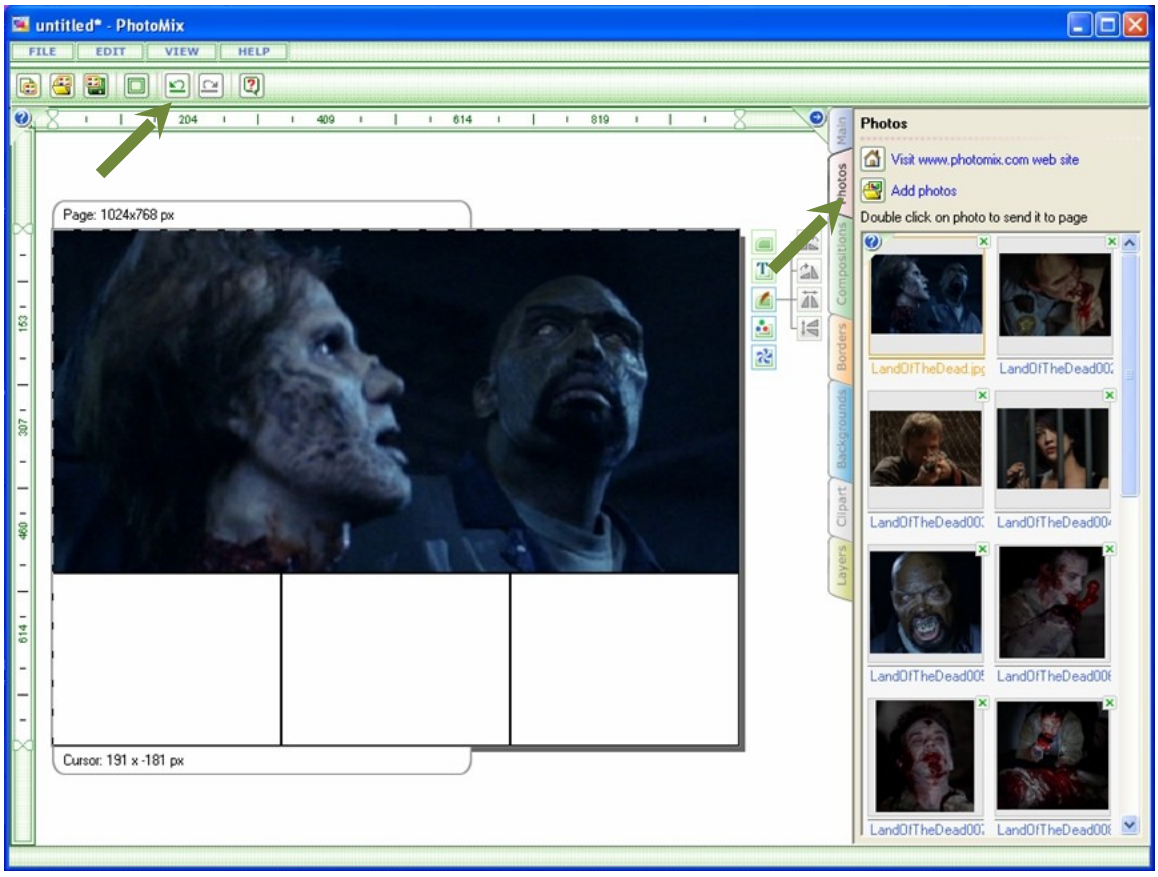
I place them where I want them and stretch them out, manipulating them into how I want them to look. See the little red squares around the pictures? Just grab those with your mouse and stretch them out. Your picture will increase in size, filling any areas within the canvas. If you decide you don't want the picture and want to put the picture back on the right, just drag and drop it back in. Or, click the **Undo** button. That's something you can play around with, but for now, lets do a simple template wallpaper using the **4-8 picture** layout. Let's say you want that layout on the right under the 4-8 photo layout. Place your mouse over it and double click it. It will appear on the left on your canvas… …



Now, you'll notice that this layout will have the pictures **touching** each other's edges. If you want **borders** in between the photos like my Poe wallpaper I mentioned before, scroll through the layout selections on the right and you will find that style.

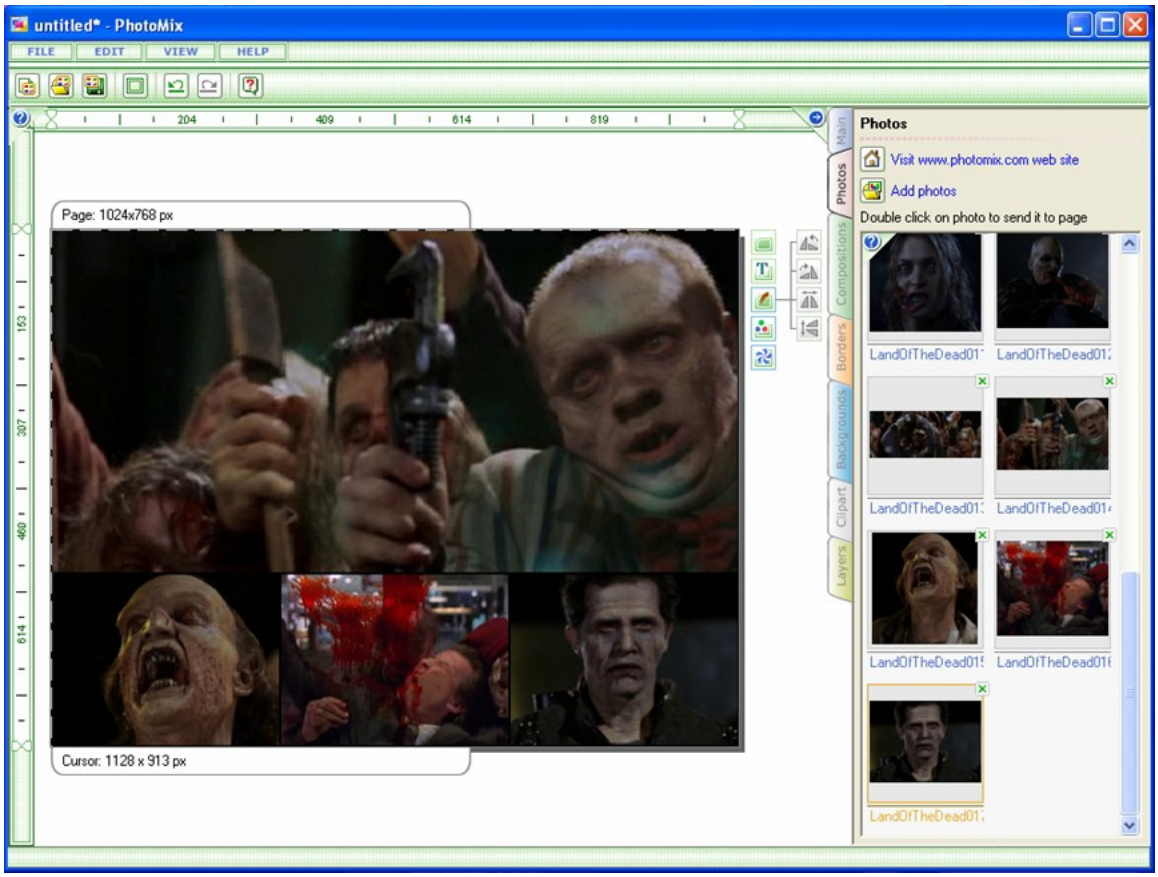
Placing Your Pictures

Once you've picked and placed your layout template, click your **Photos** tab to get back to your photos. Start dragging and dropping pictures into the boxes based on what fits nicely and what you want in there! I've put this picture in here of **Big Daddy** holding another zombie buddies shot off head, but as you can see, compared to the original picture in the right hand margin, it's cut off a little of the image. That's because the program is blowing it up to fill the bigger upper space. I simply hit **Undo** (the little green arrow above the picture) and the picture is placed back to the right with the other photos.

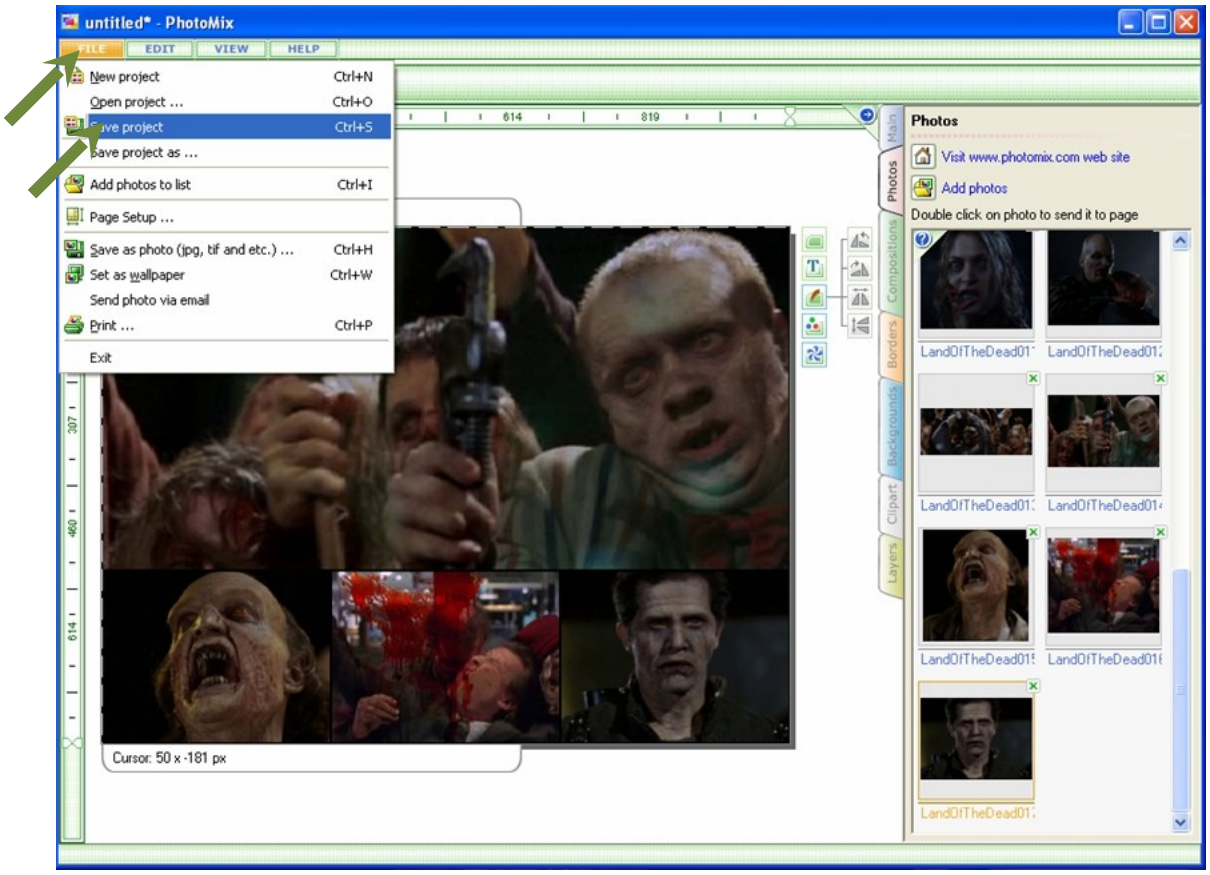


A longer picture will work best for this space, so if you've captured longer ones, try to put them in this space. You'll get better at this after you've created more wallpaper. Here you can see I've dragged and dropped four **Land Of The Dead** pictures into the layout. I just love that guys sightless eyes on the top right! He looks like my Uncle. Now guess what? If you've followed the steps I've outlined, you've created your own wallpaper!

This is the finished wallpaper, but it needs some finishing touches which are coming right up!



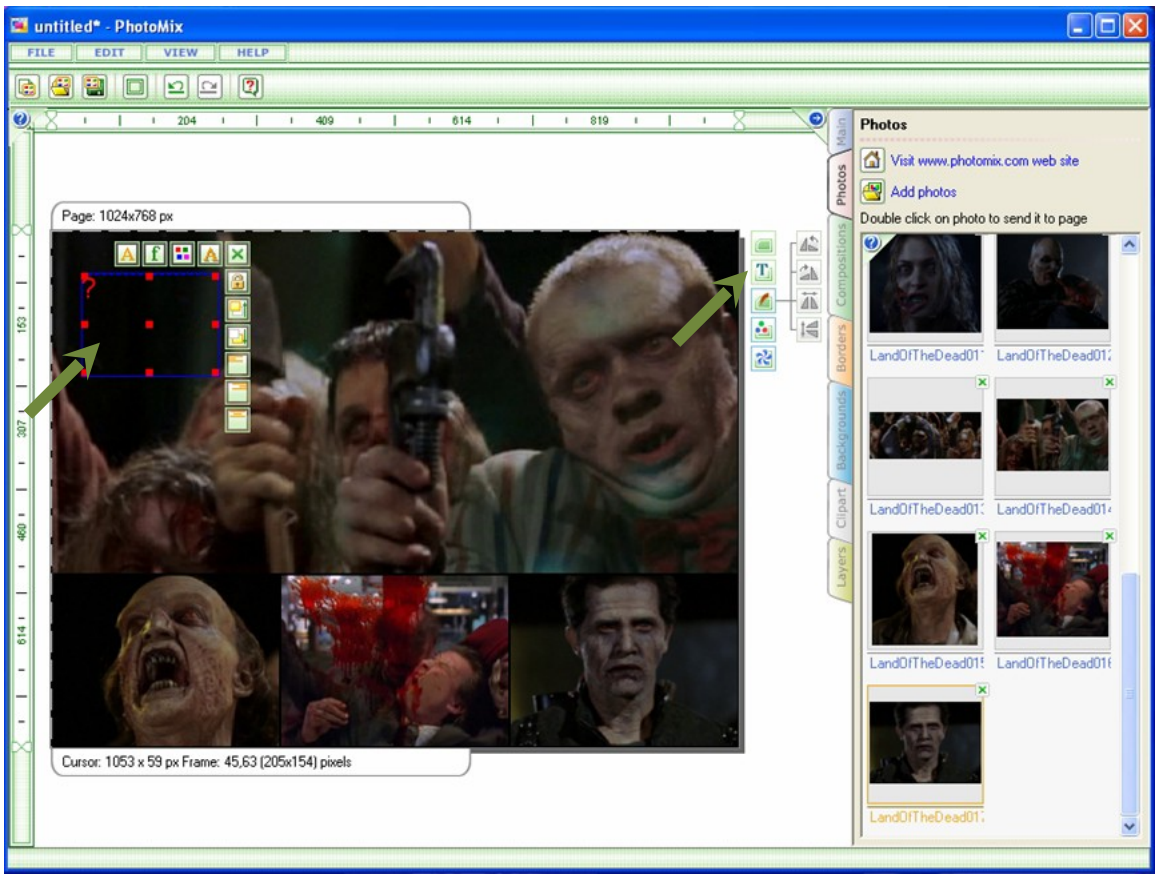
It really is as easy as that! Make sure you save your work by clicking **File/Save Project** which will save it to **My Documents**.



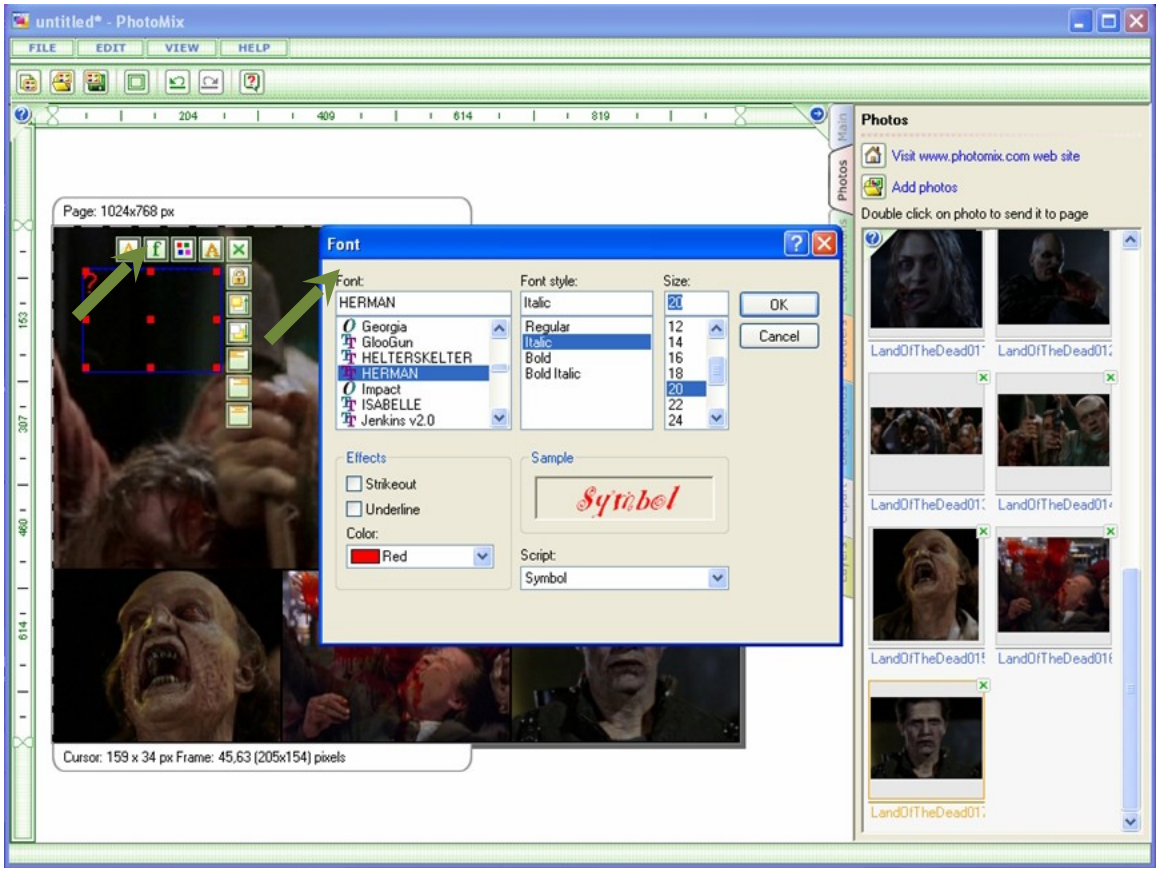
Adding Text

Ok, you've decided you'd like to add some text to your unfinished wallpaper. **(Yes, you can go back and tweak saved wallpaper.)** In this case, I'll add my domain name of my website www.horrorstew.com. My wallpapers get passed around frequently, so I like people to know where they came from and who made them! Hit that dark green **T** next to

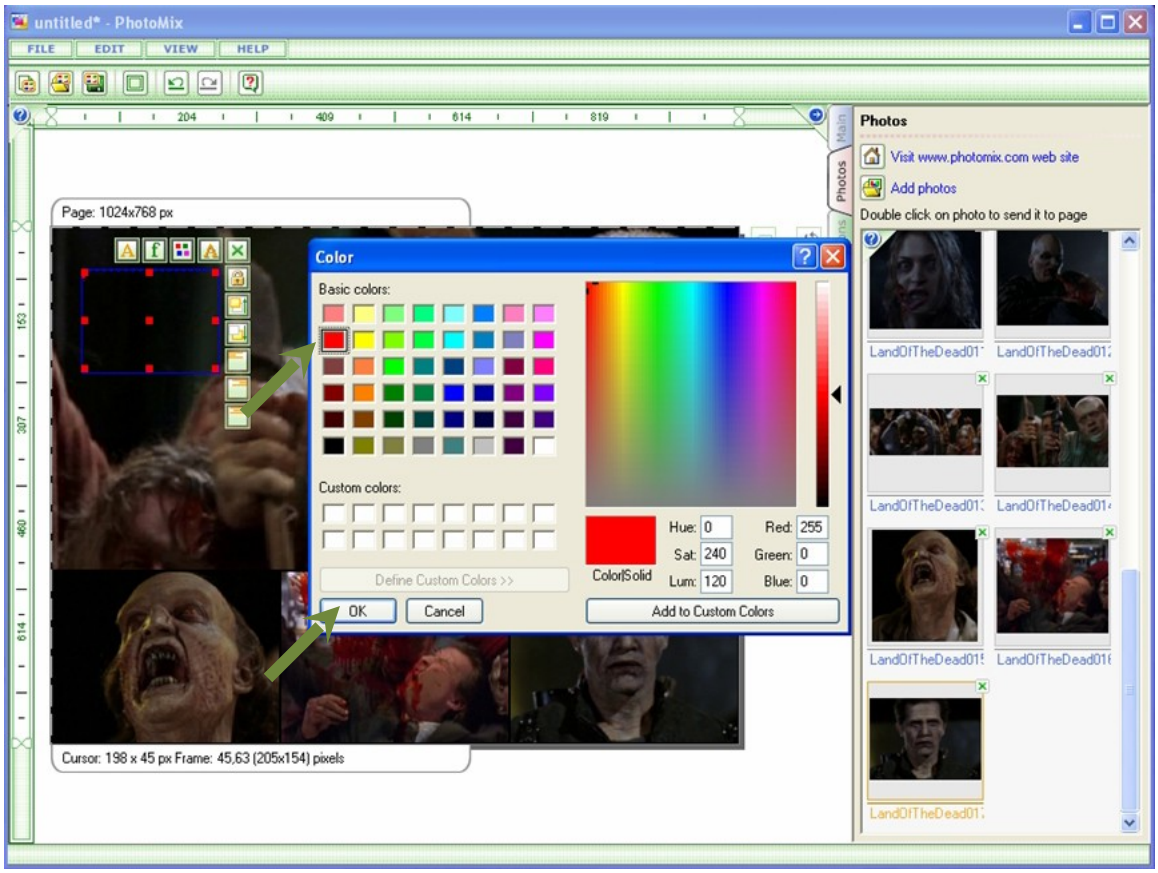
my Uncle's head. Up will pop the text box which is the box you can type letters into……



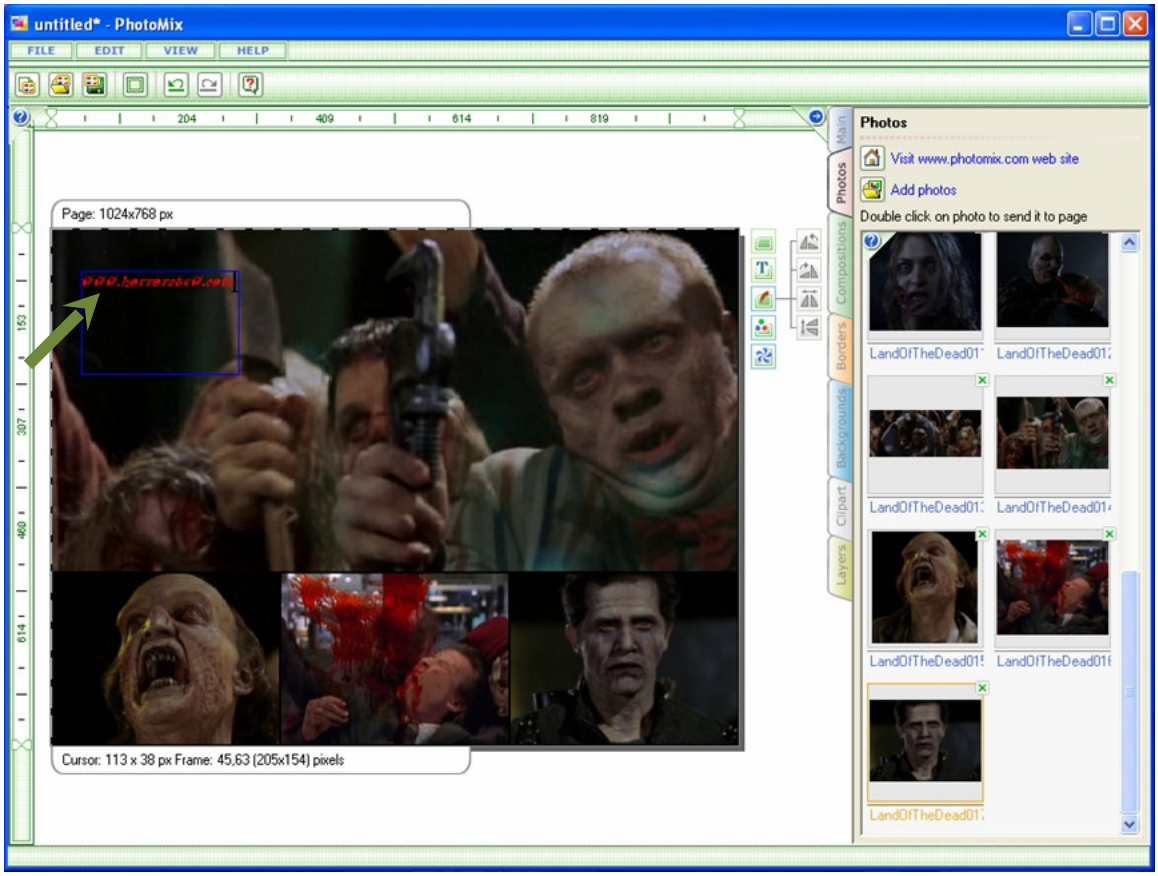
There's some other cool things you can do here, like change the font, the color, and the size of the letters. In my website's case, I always look for the creepy stuff. To change the font, click the **F** right above your text box that you brought up. You'll see the **Font** display box pop up……



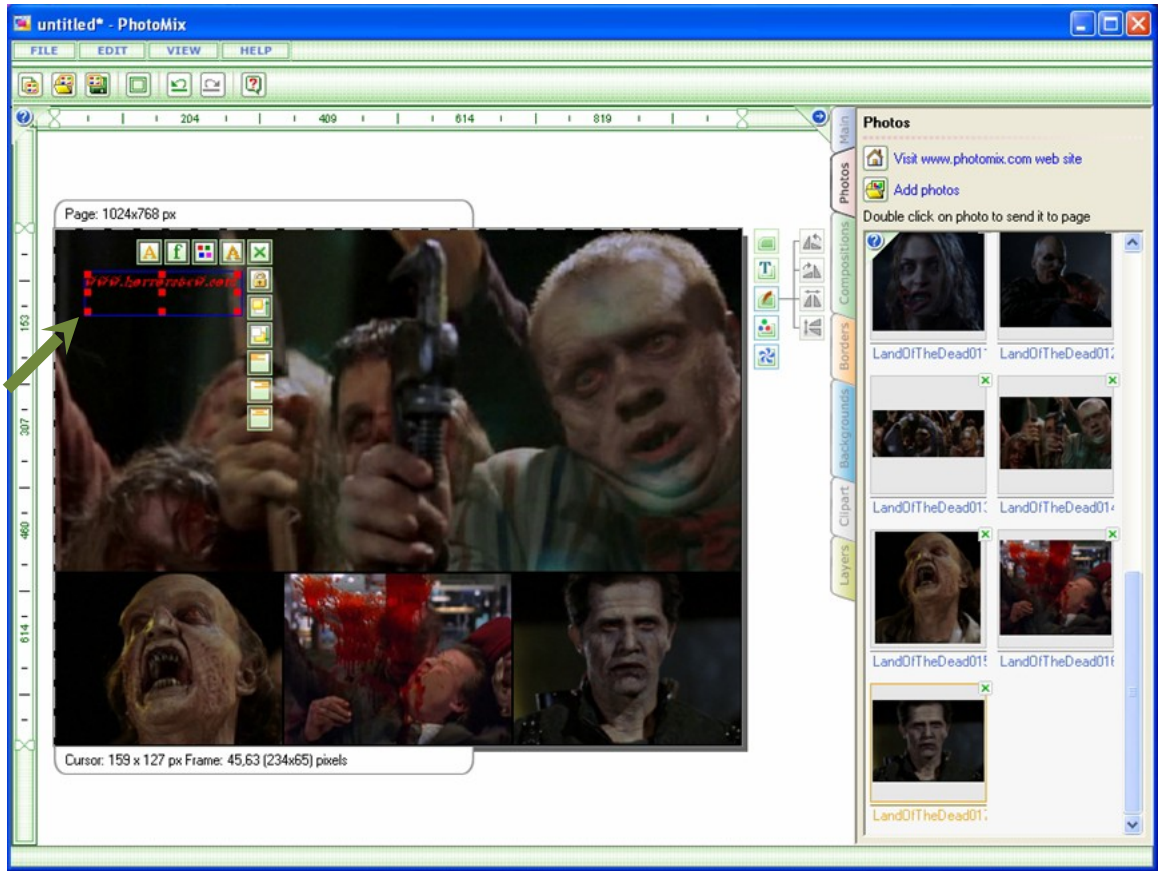
……showing all the stuff you can do for your font. Here I've changed my font to **Herman** which is **sampled** to the right to show you what the style will look like. I changed to color to **red** because **Land Of The Dead** has a lot of dark scenes. Red shows up on black well. I've also changed the font style from **Regular** to **Italic** and the size of the font to **20**, giving the already creepy **Herman** font more of a twist! Now, click **ok** if that's what you want. Once you put the text in and you don't like it, not to worry, nothing is set in stone here; just undo it by clicking on the **Text Box** and it will outline in red squares again, showing you that it's ready to be worked on. Hit your delete to erase the text you previously typed in. Make sure you click next to the **Font** box in the little box that has the multicolored squares in it to check and see if that color palette reflects the color you picked for your font. If not, choose red here and click ok……



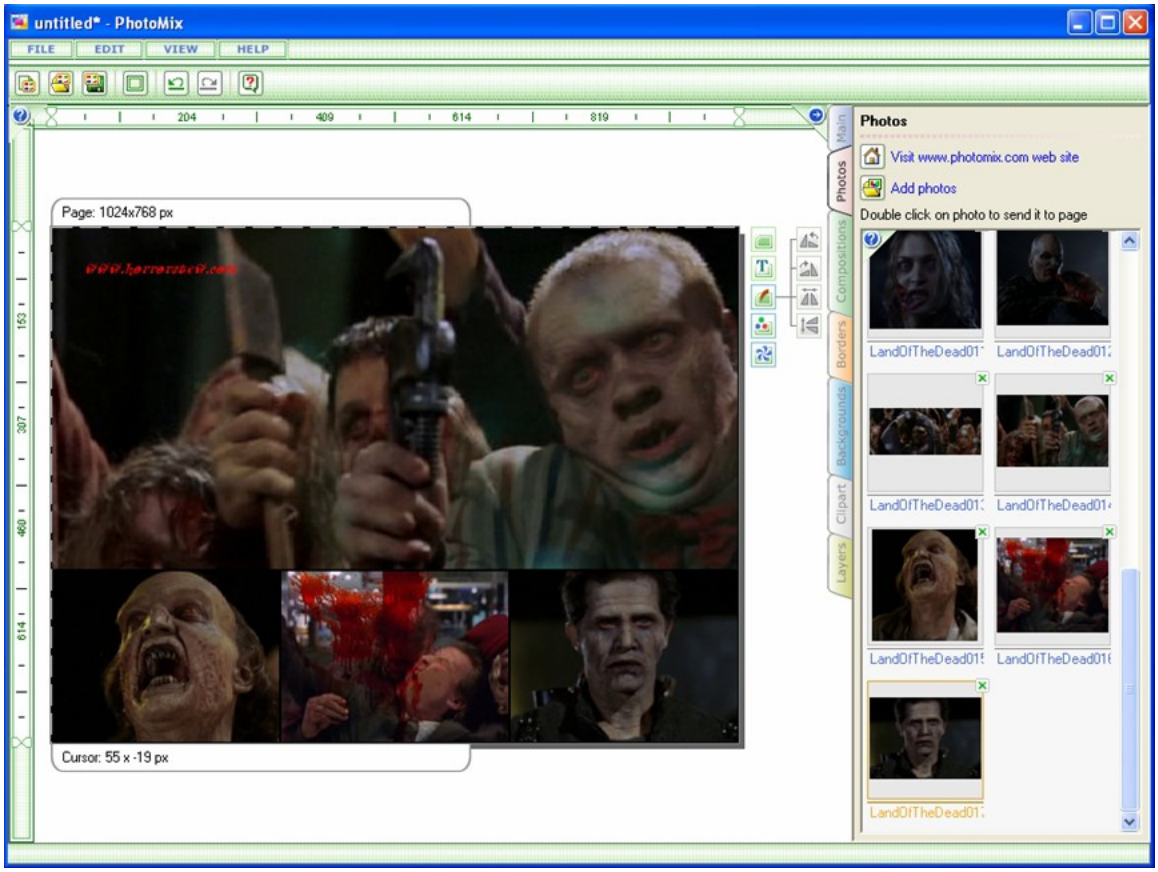
Click the **A** at the left of the **F** to enter the text. You'll see the little red squares disappear, showing that it's prepped for text entering! You'll see a little exclamation mark in the box. Why that's left there, I don't know, but I simply hit my keyboard **Delete** and it goes away. Ok, I entered my domain address here……



If you enter a wrong letter, just **Backspace** on your keyboard to remove them, then start again. After you get your text put in, click outside of the box to bring up the little red squares. If you bring your mouse close to the edge of the lines you can squish the box tight like so……



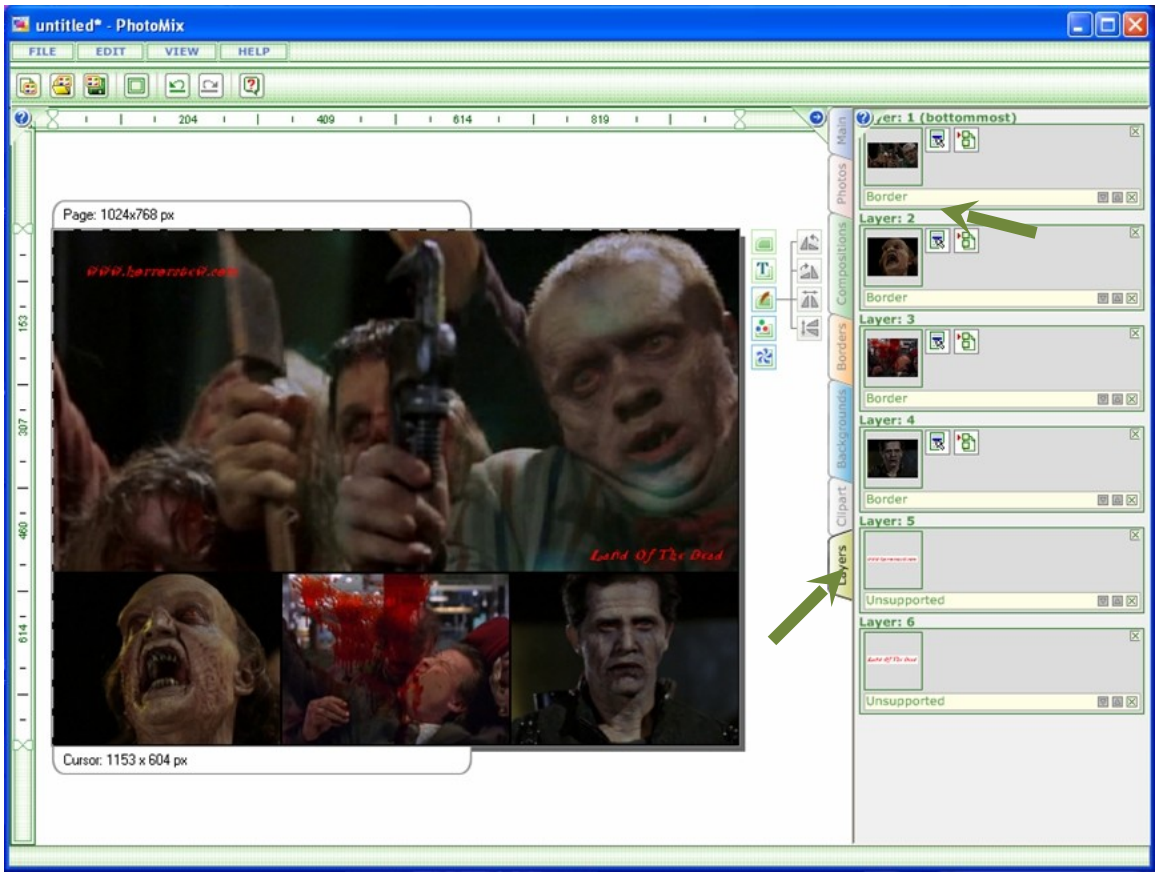
Move the whole box by clicking inside the text box with your mouse arrow and dragging it to whatever location on you wallpaper you want the text to appear. Click outside of the canvas to get rid of the little red squares around your text box.



If you want to make changes to your text, simply click right on the text and the little red squares are back, enabling you to work on it once again!

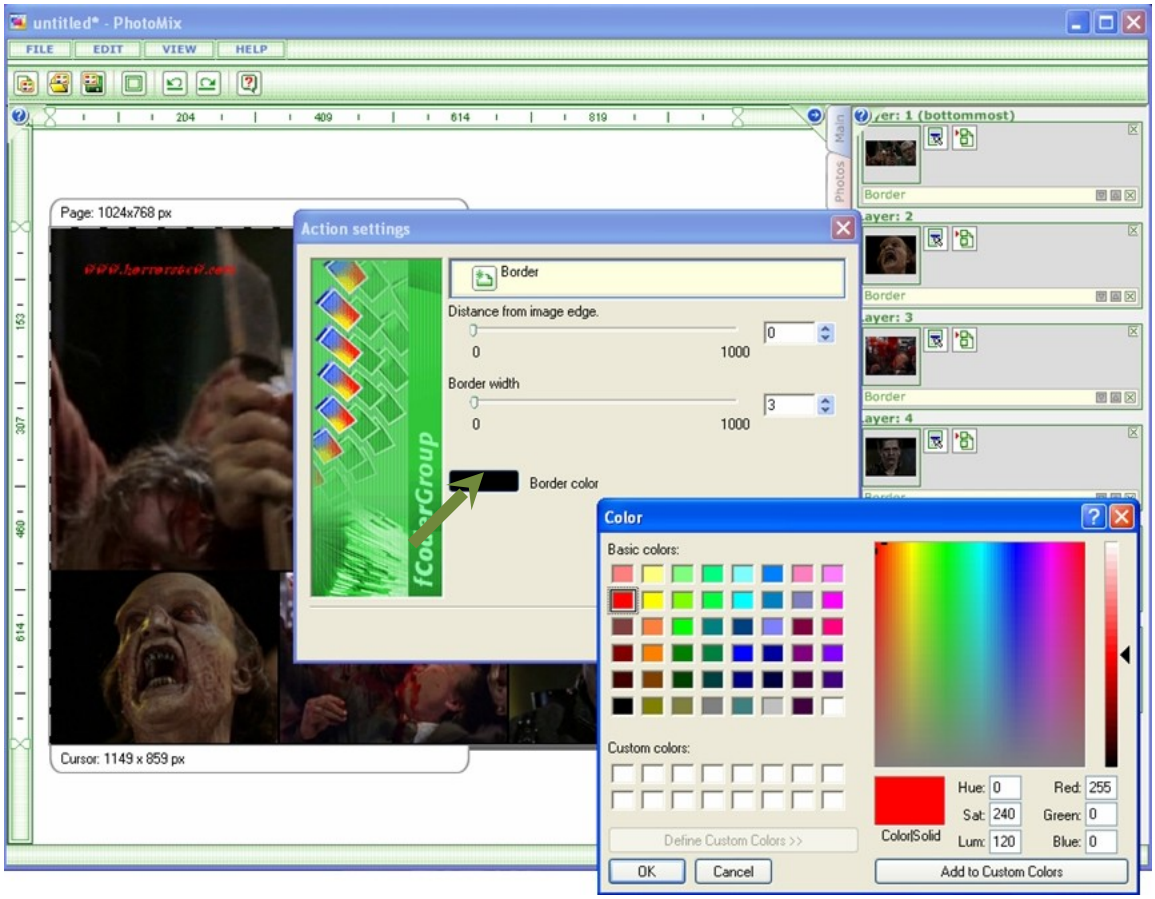
Adding A Border

You can add a colored border around your pictures to break them up and also around the entire wallpaper by clicking the **Layers** tab.

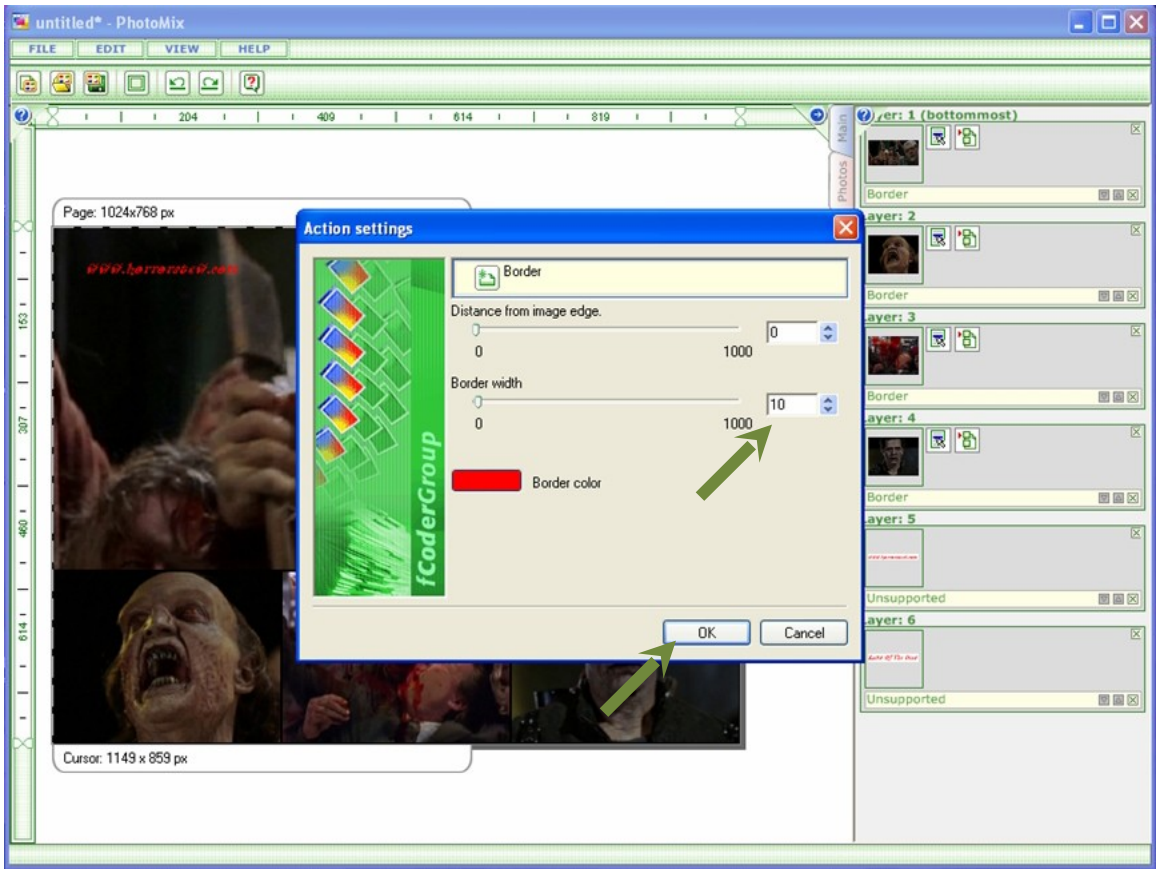


On the right, you'll see that margin change to reflect each of the photos you have in your

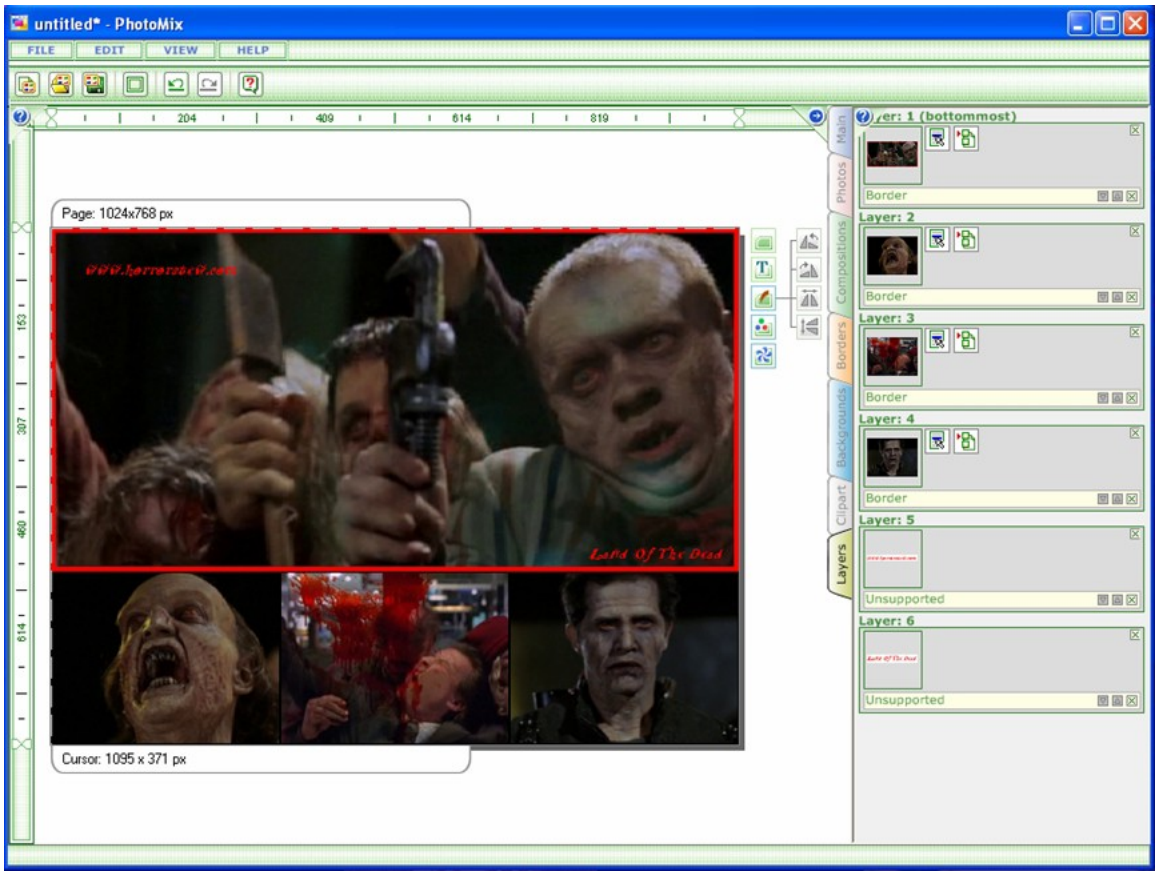
wallpaper. Under each photo, click on the **Border** bar to bring up the **Action Settings** box with which you can change the border color and the border width. Click on the black **Border Color**. Up will come a color box where you can change the color of your border.....



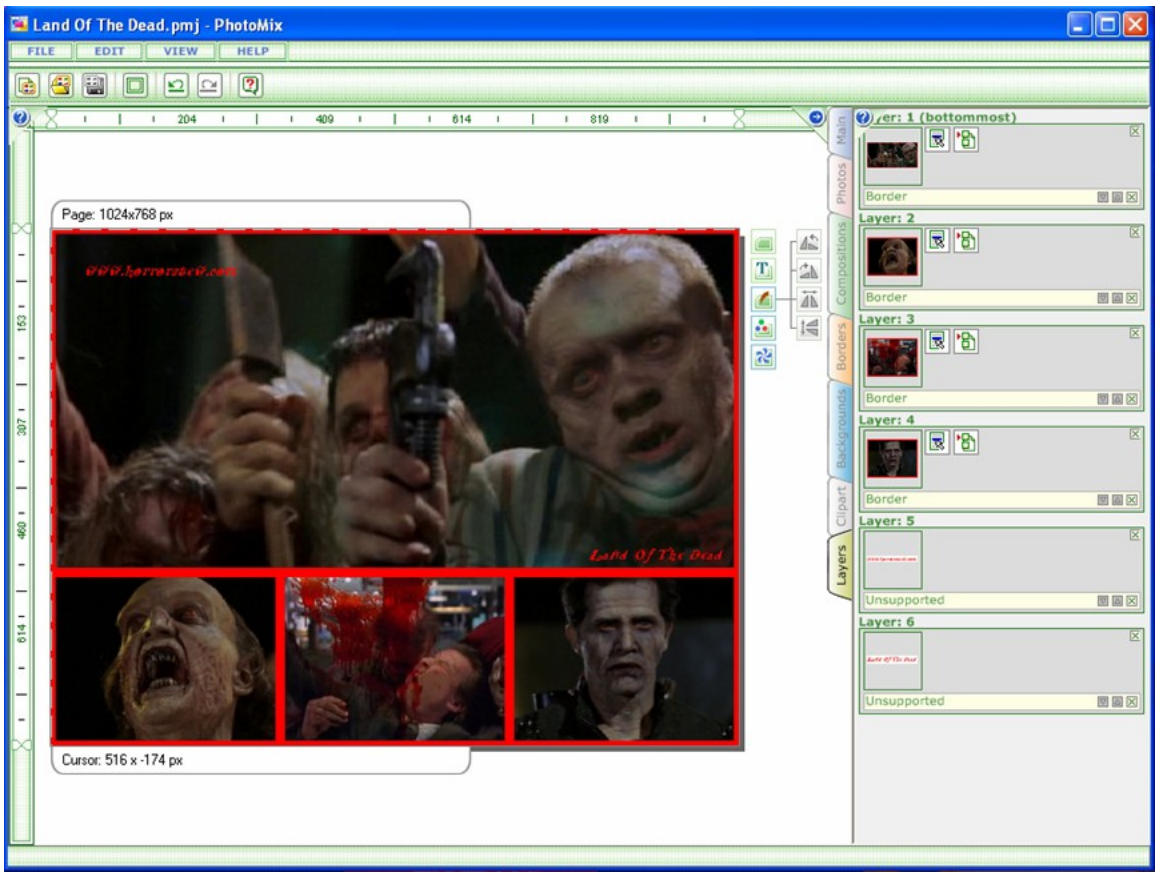
I picked red, then changed the **Border Width** to 10 and clicked **Ok**.



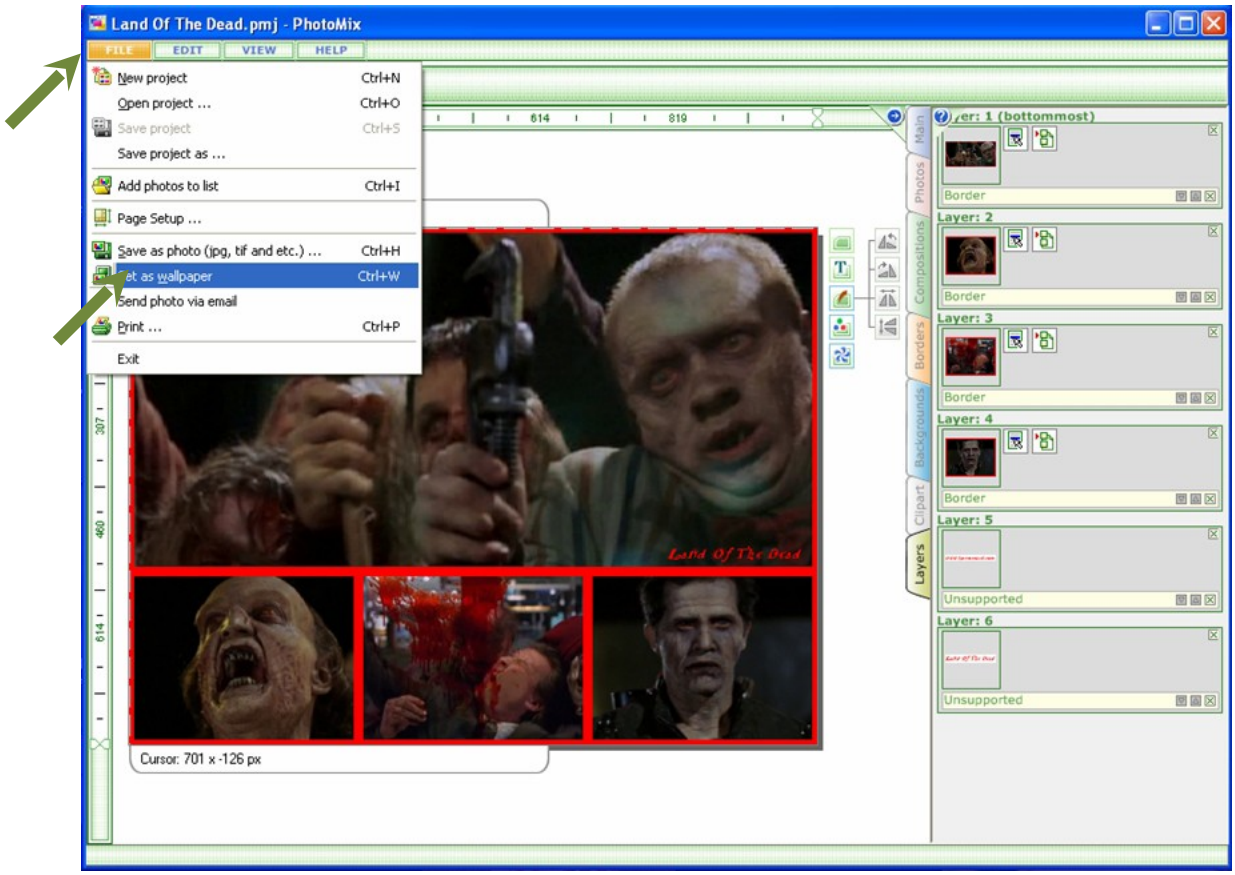
Now you can see the border which is placed around the picture you were working on in **Layers**!



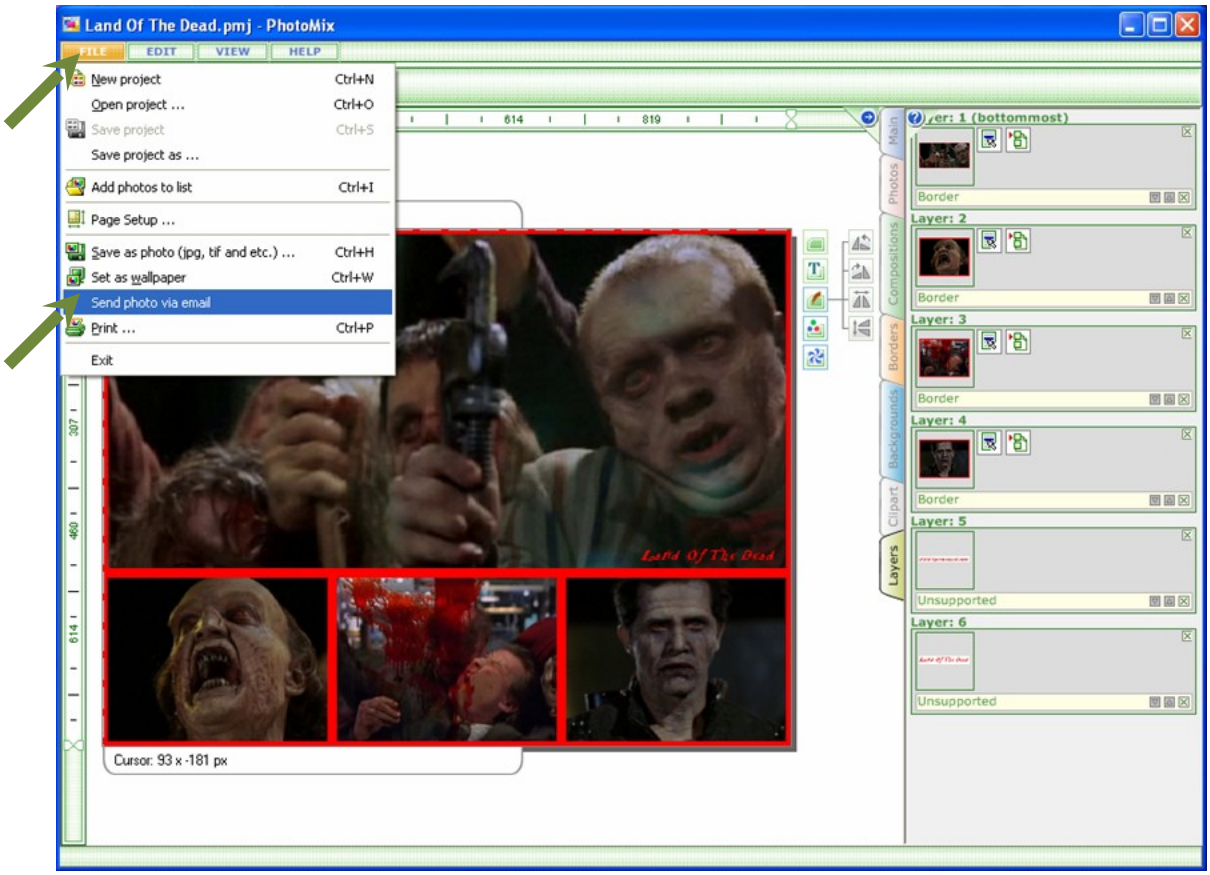
Do so for the rest of the pictures if you like. Here's the finished look:



If you want to automatically apply it as wallpaper to your computer, click on **File** and **Set As Wallpaper**!

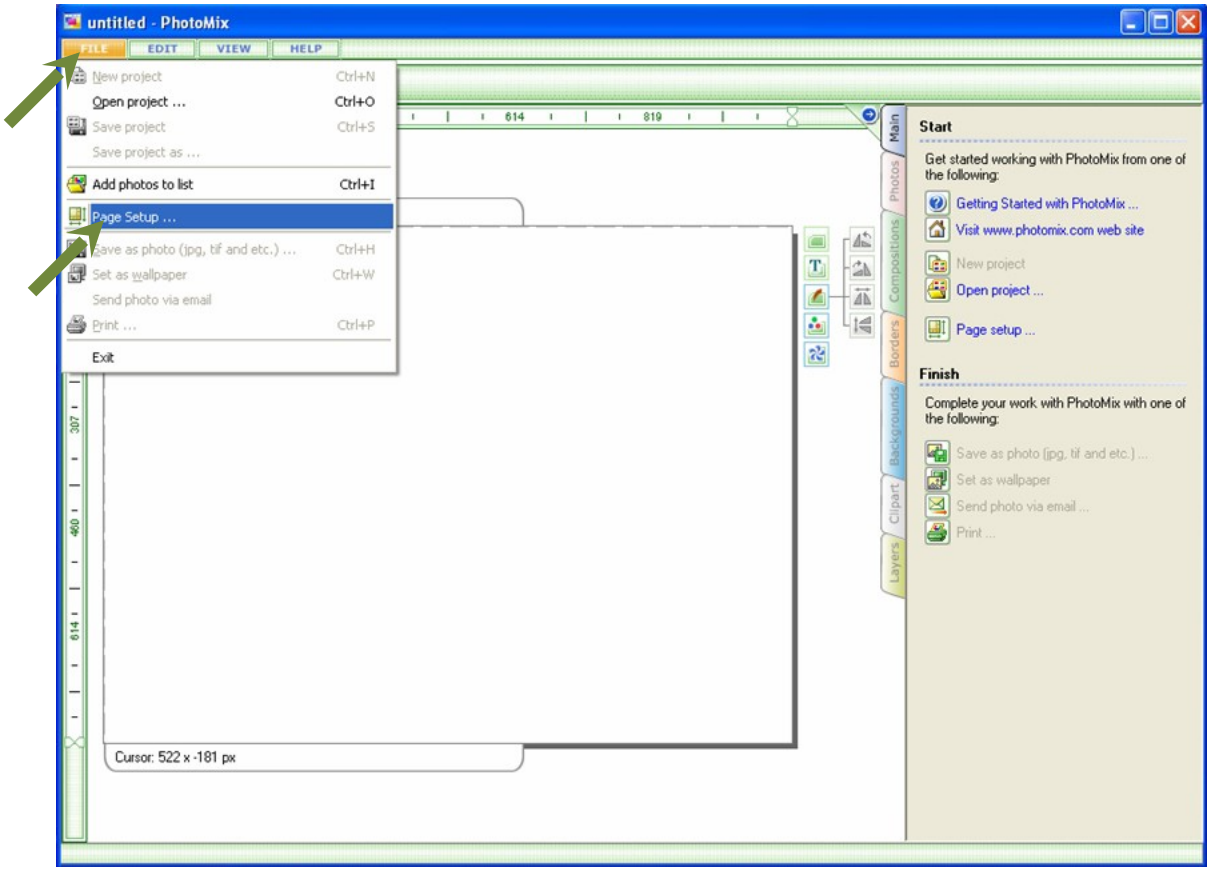


You also can send the wallpaper to your friends using the email feature. Just got to **File** and click **Send Photo Via Email**……

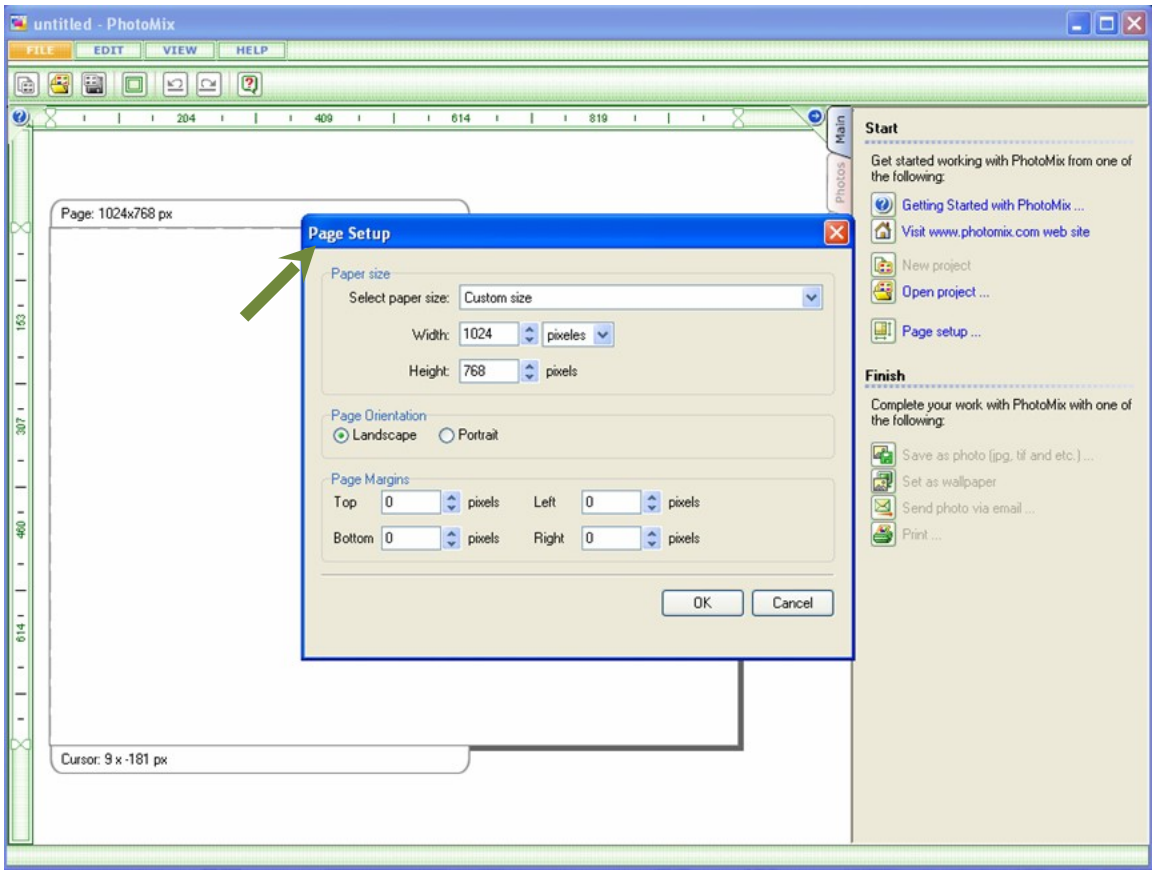


Other Noteworthy Tips

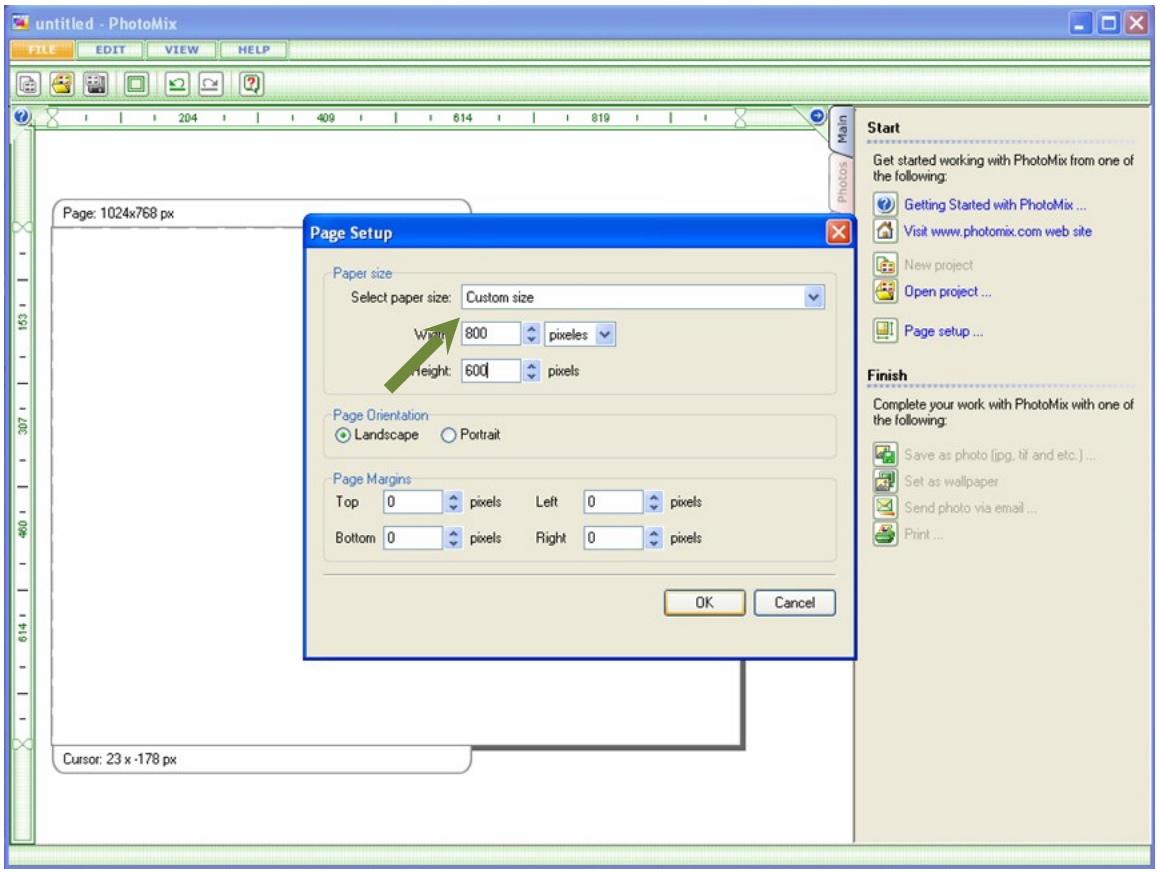
The wallpaper we made above was made in 1024 X 768 mode. To create a wallpaper in 800 X 600 mode (another common size), go to **File** and click **Page Setup**.



The **Page Setup** box will come up where you can manipulate the width and the height of your wallpaper.

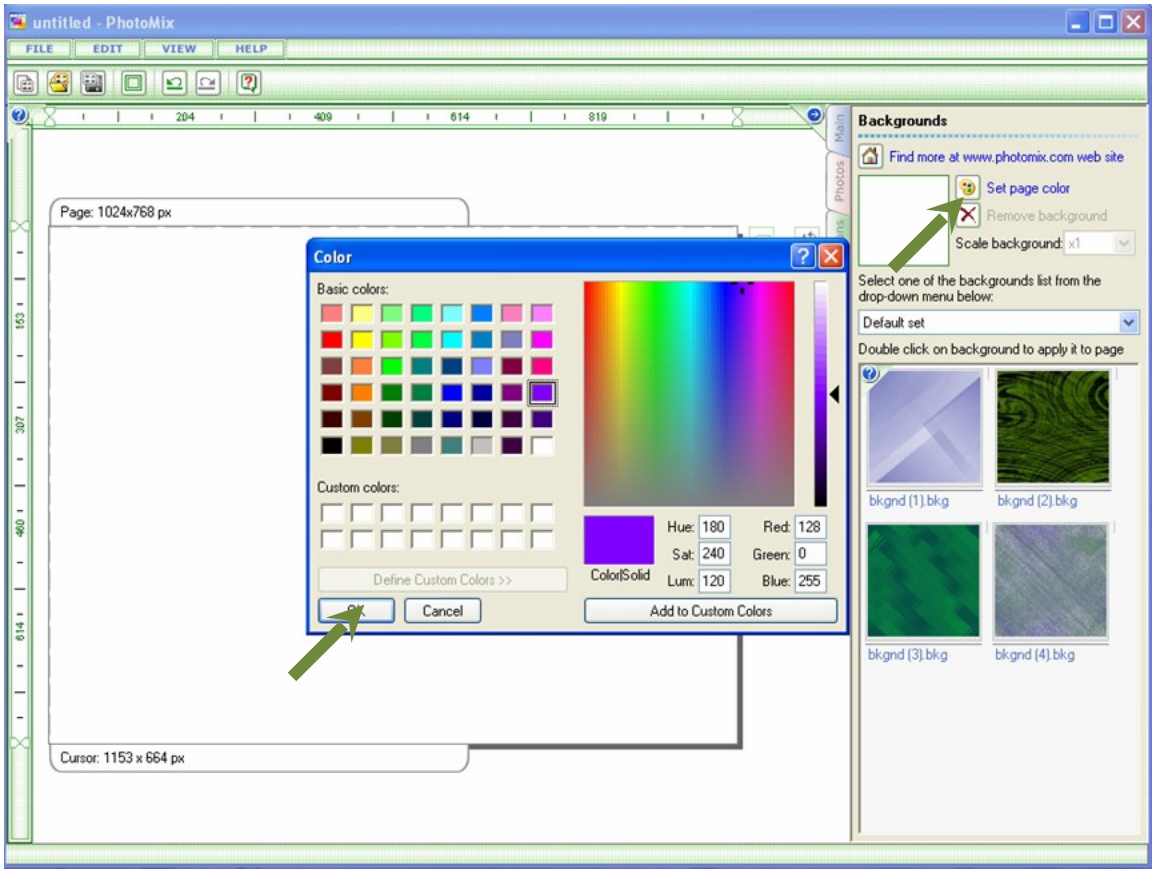


Make sure **Select Paper Size** says **Custom Size** then simply change the width to 800 and the height to 600 before you start your next wallpaper……

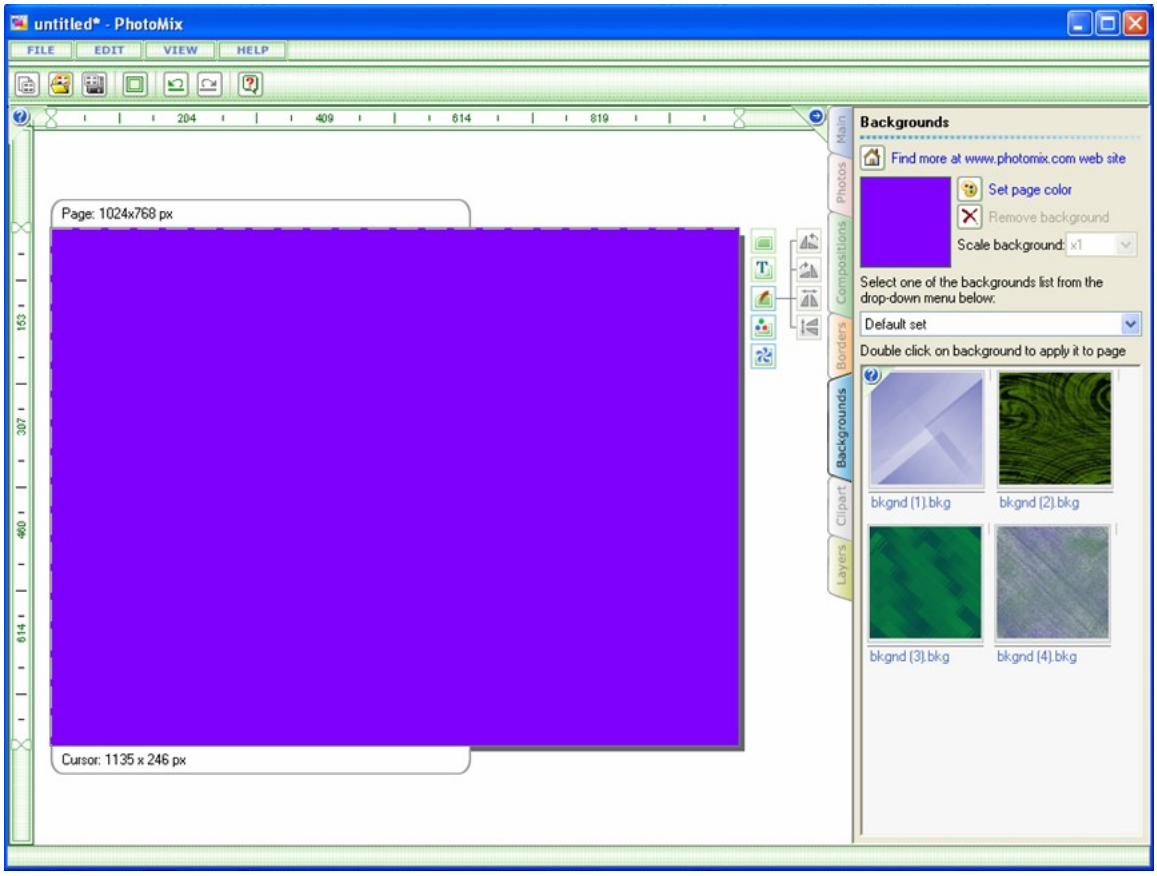


Choosing A Colored Background

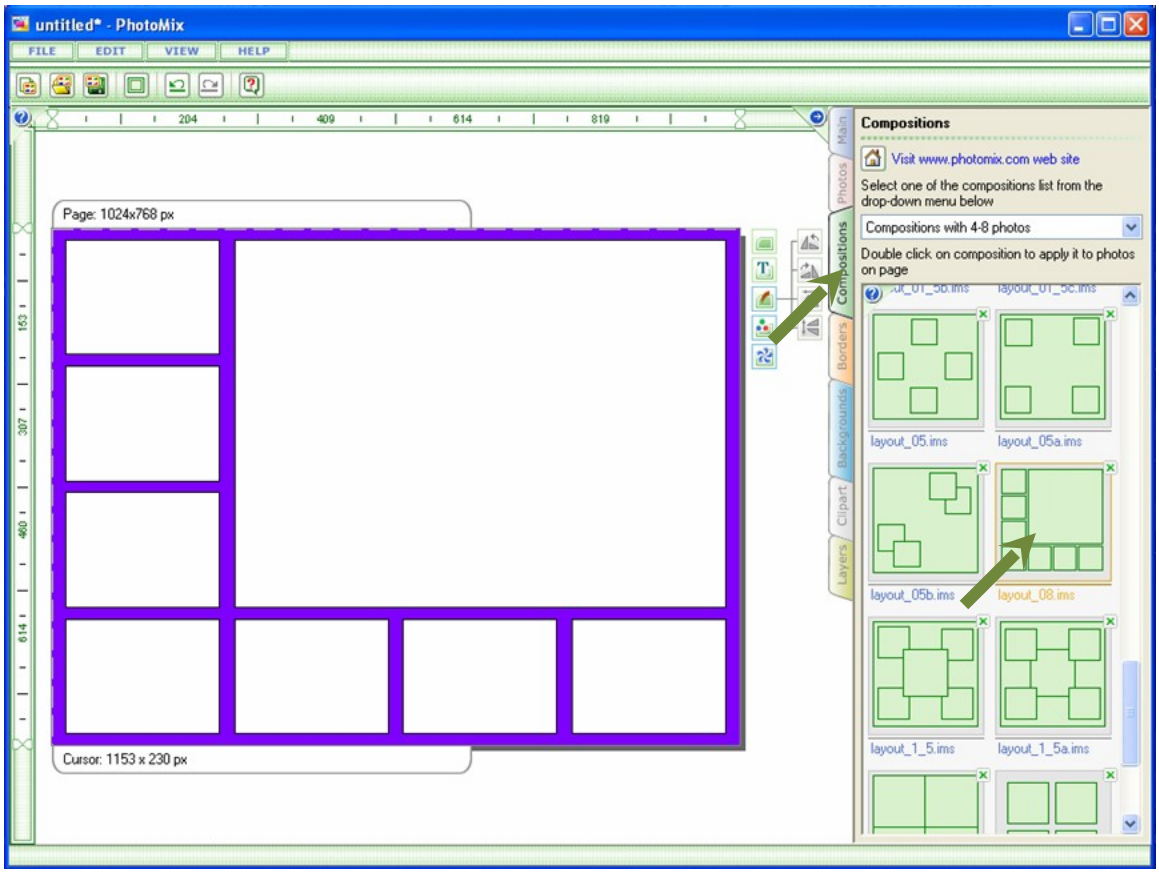
The Poe wallpaper that I made has a black background. I set the color by clicking on the **Backgrounds** tab. Click **Set Page Color** and the **Color palette** pops up, letting you choose whatever color background that you want behind your wallpaper pictures.



I've picked purple just for the heck of it! If you look at my wallpapers at www.horrorstew.com/Gory-Horror-Wallpaper, you'll find great examples of colored backgrounds in many of my wallpapers. Anyway, click **Ok** and you'll see the screen completely fill with the color (below).


untitled* - PhotoMix
FILE
EDIT
VIEW
HELP
Page: 1024x768 px
Cursor: 1135 x 246 px
Backgrounds
Find more at www.photomix.com web site
Set page color
Remove background
Scale background:
Select one of the backgrounds list from the drop-down menu below:
Default set
Double click on background to apply it to page
bkgnd (1).bkg
bkgnd (2).bkg
bkgnd (3).bkg
bkgnd (4).bkg
Main
Photos
Compositions
Borders
Backgrounds
Cliparts
Layers

No problem here though, because when you go back up and click on the **Compositions** tab and add a layout to your canvas, it overlays on the purple background, ready for your pictures and filling in automatically between them with the purple color!

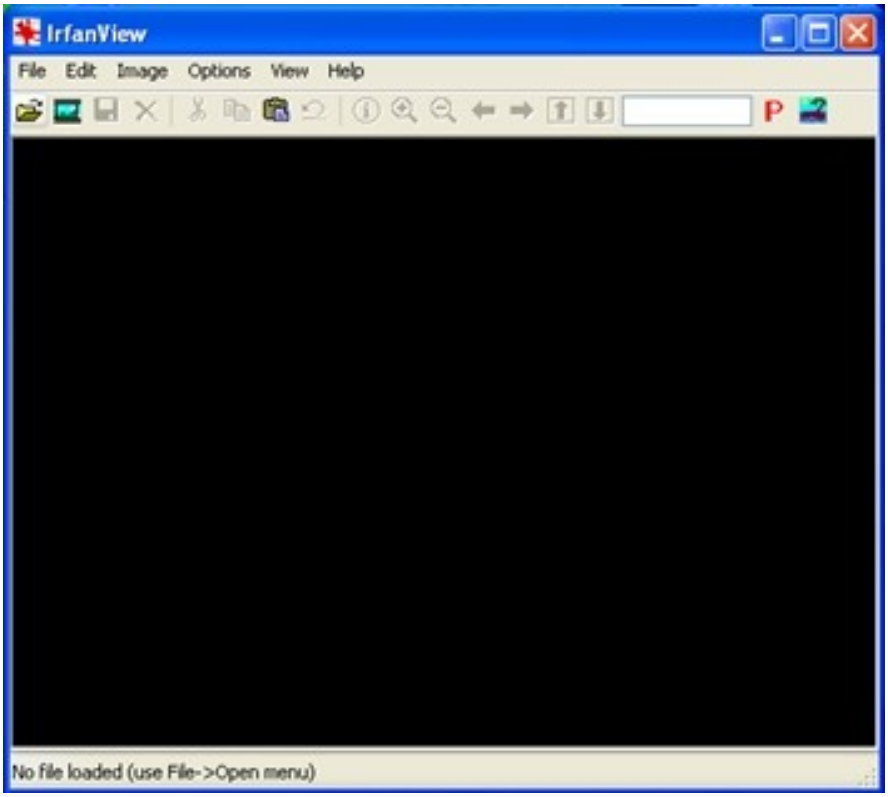


It's fair to mention that this is the way I make MY wallpapers. I'm afraid I haven't completely explored **Photo Mix** to its full potential. I'm satisfied with the wallpapers I make and so are my customers! You may have noticed, however, that there are many tabs and other different settings and things you can do with **Photo Mix**! I believe I've only just scratched the surface with the program. You may move ahead and really create some cool things, surpassing anything I've done! Go for it, explore, and have fun with the program!

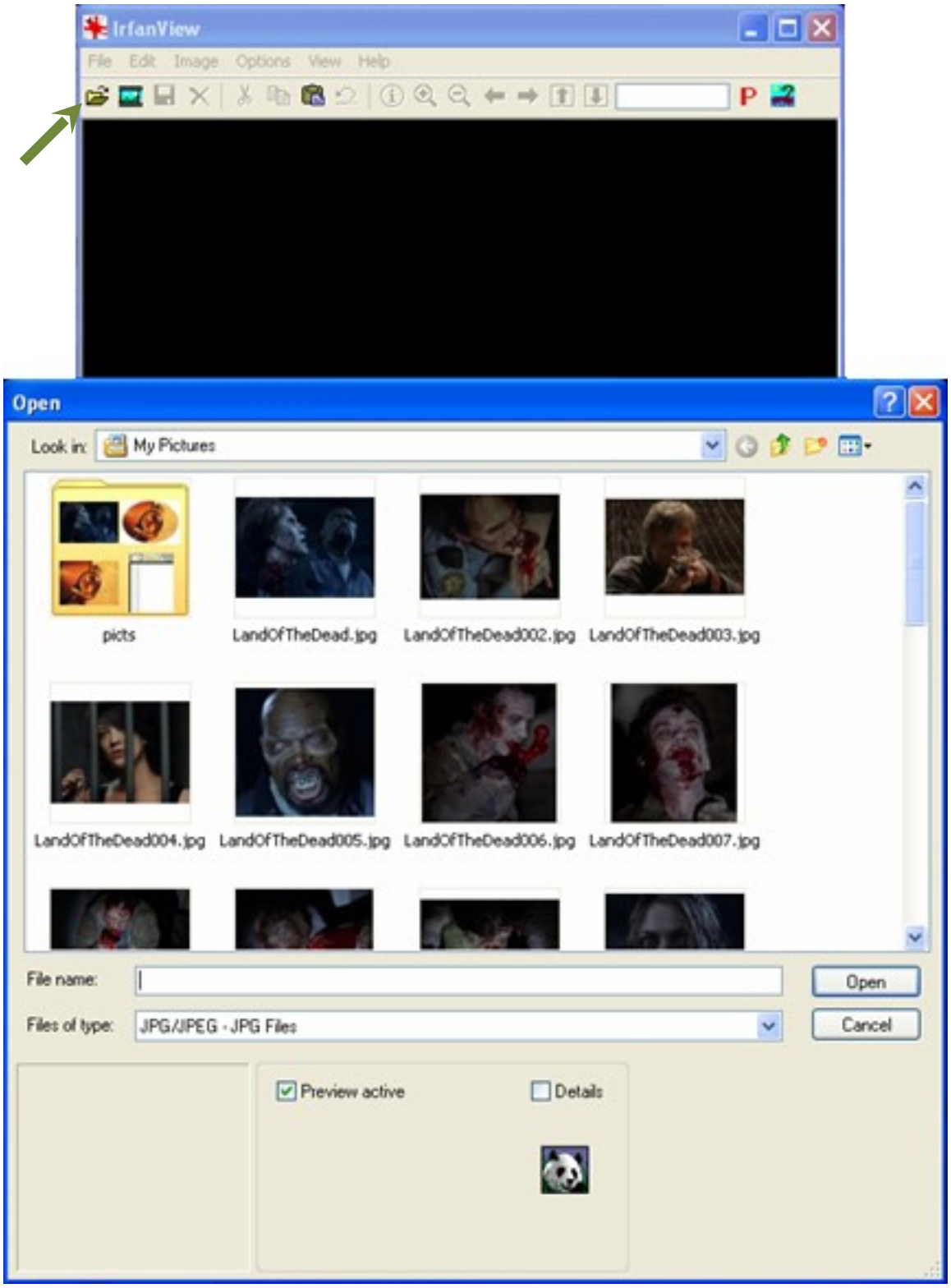
Creating Horror Backgrounds Using "Inside" Tips, Tricks, and Free Software Part Four: Using IrfanView To Lighten, Resize, And Manipulate Pictures

Making A Dark Picture Lighter As Well As Coloring Black And White Pictures

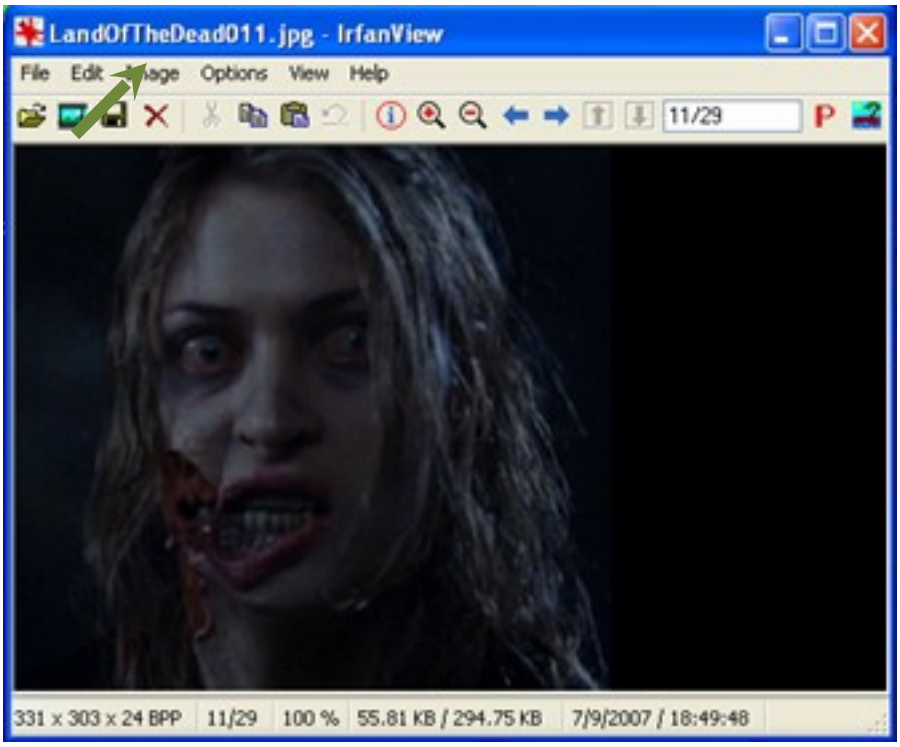
One of the situations that I have sometimes is that photos that I capture off of horror movies are dark. I mean, that's typical. Horror movies are shot in the dark a lot. Well, those dark photos make for poor wallpaper at times, so I basically lighten them up using the **IrfanView**. I only lighten them a little, because you still want the photo to look like it belongs to your other pictures within your wallpaper. Here, I've opened the **IrfanView** program.



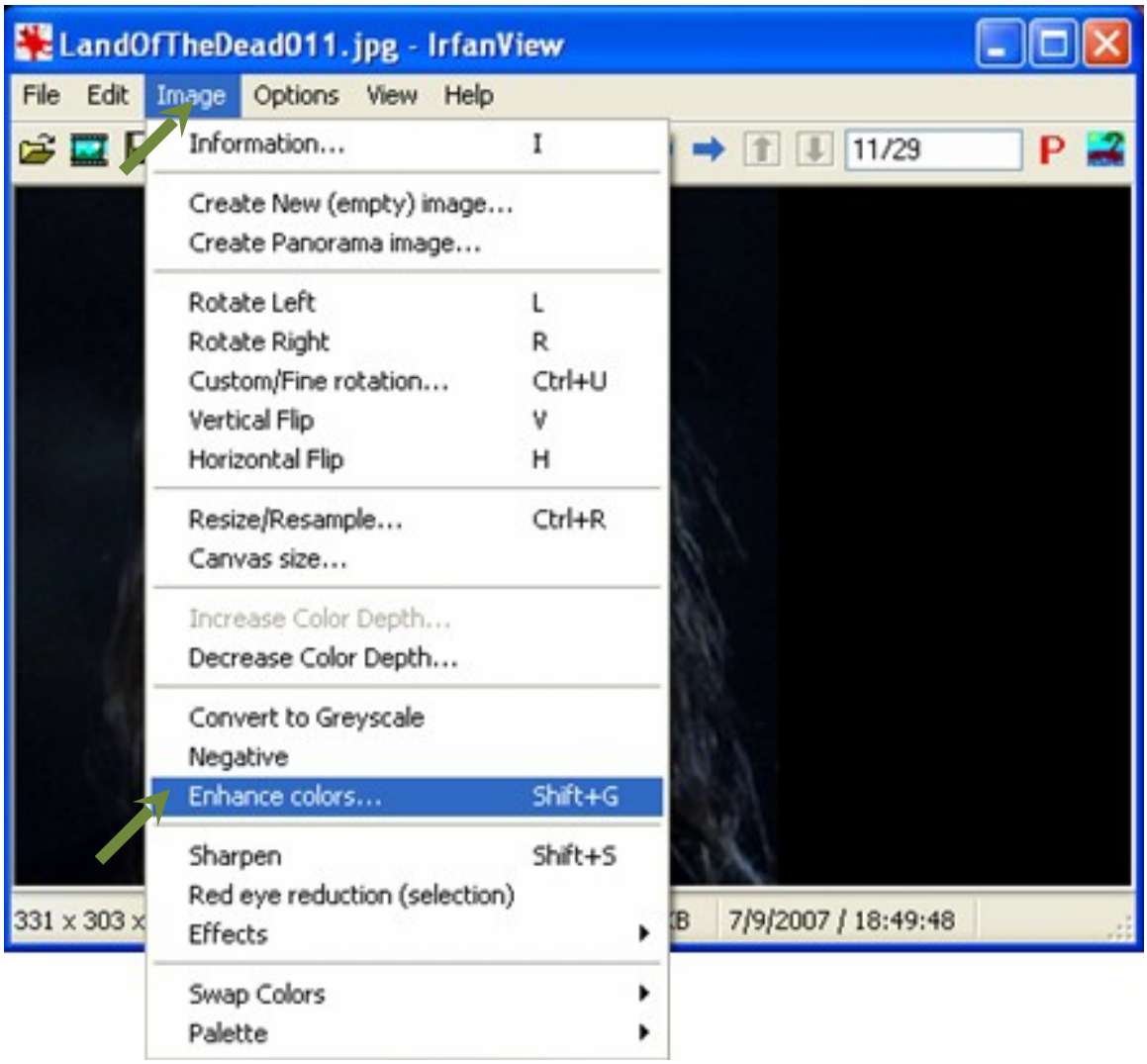
Click the **open file picture** at top left or click **File** then **Open**. Both will open the **My Pictures** box showing all of your pictures for your wallpaper that you saved there.



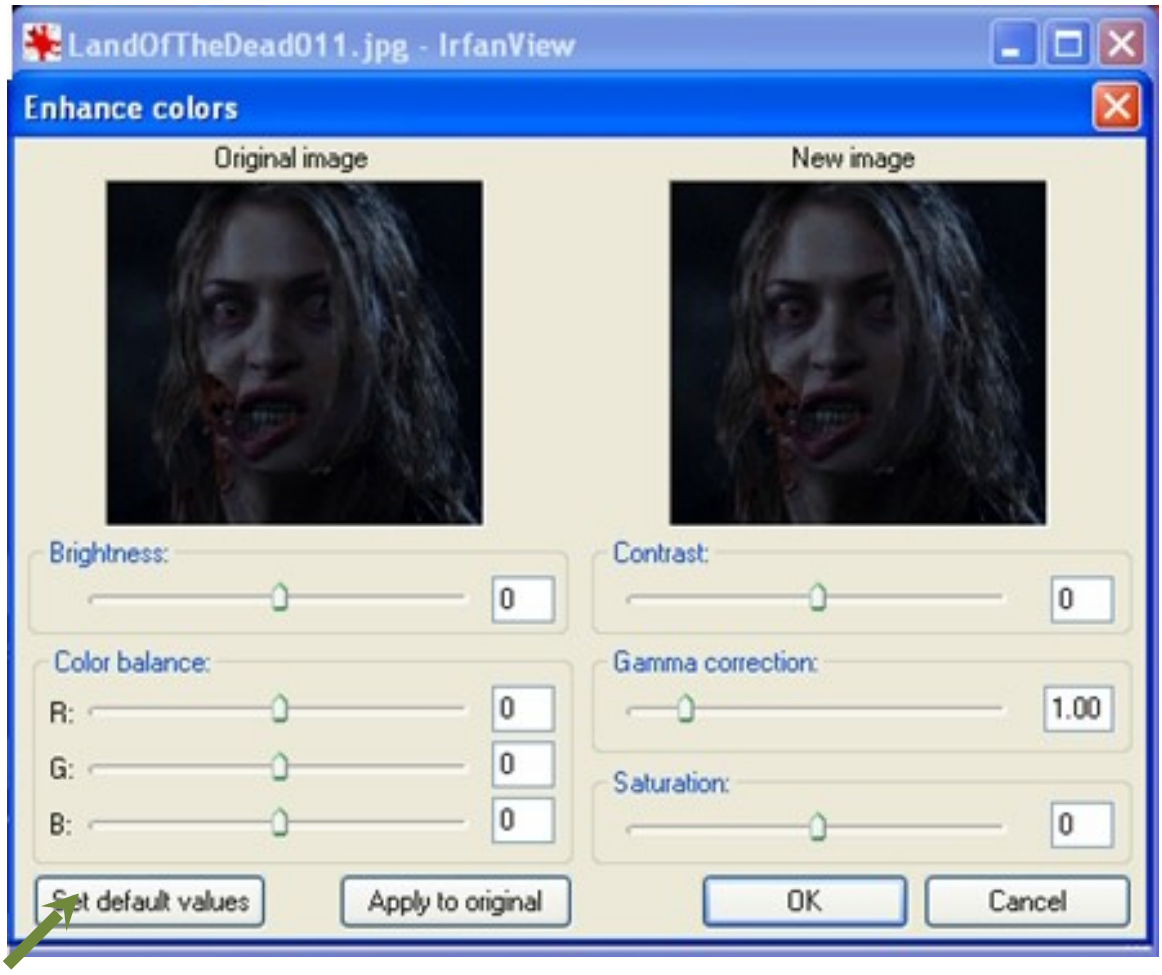
I picked the LandOfTheDead011.jpg image of this zombie chick with part of her cheek ripped off and her side choppers showing. Nice, huh?!



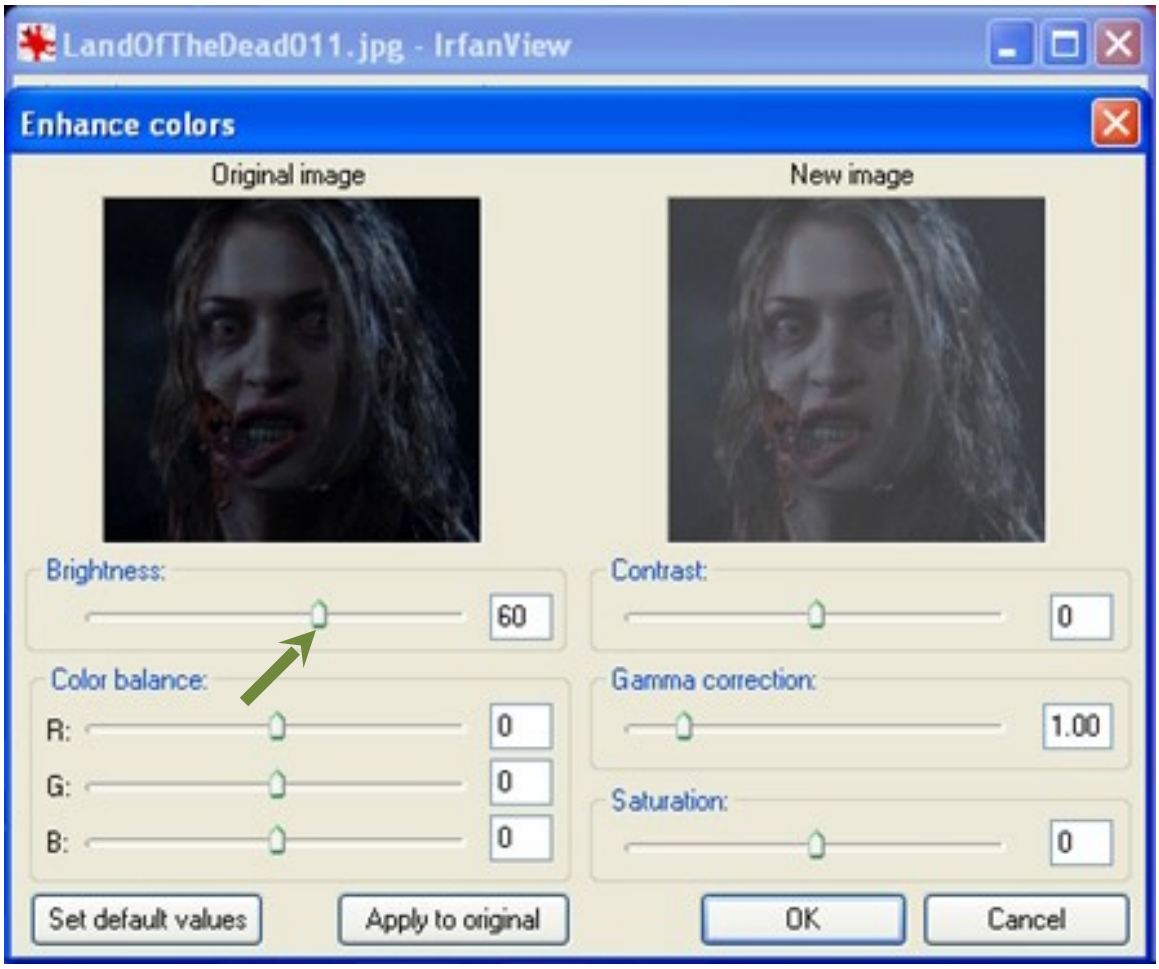
She's just a little dark here. Click on **Image**. A bar will dropdown. Click **Enhance Colors**……



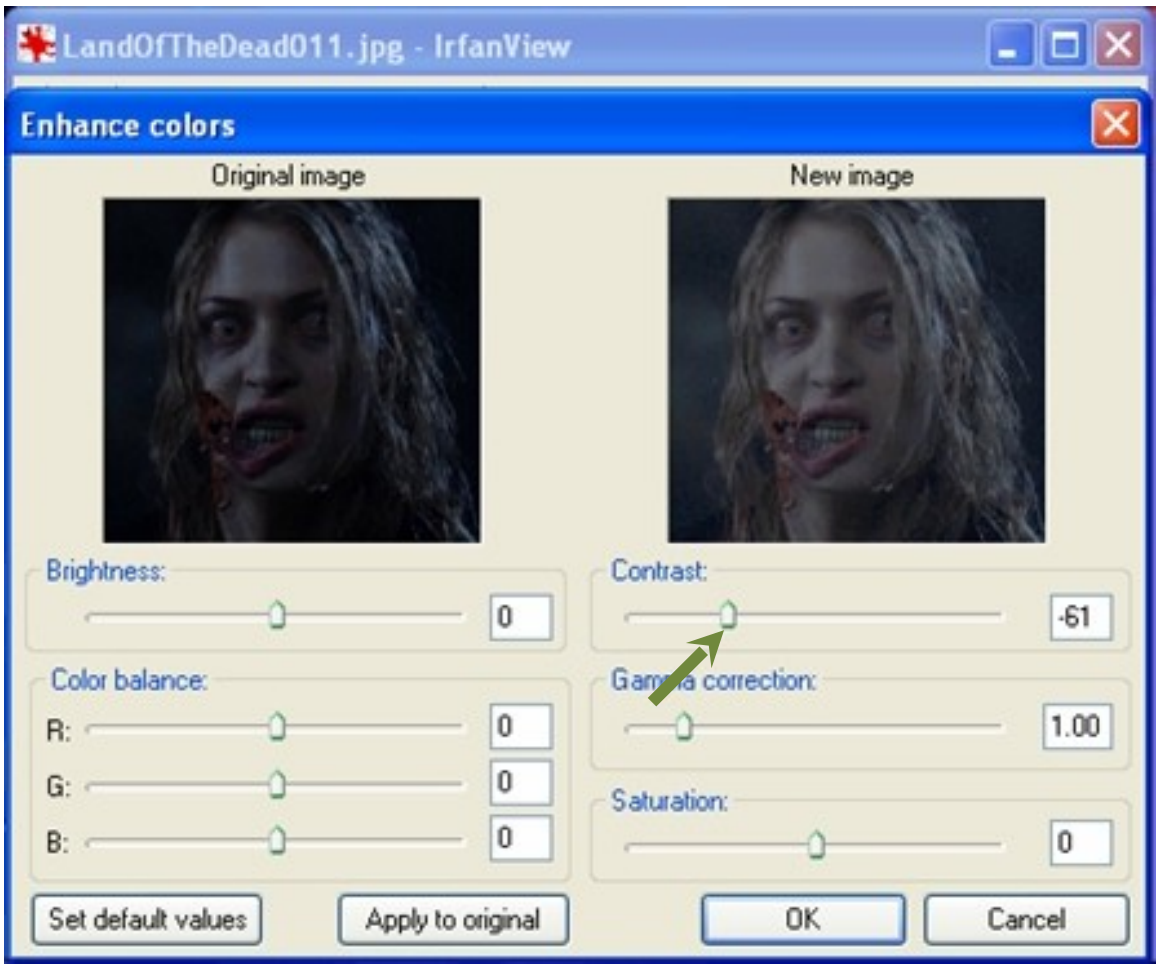
You'll see the **Enhance Colors** box come up with the original image on the left and the new image on the right.



This is a pretty cool tool area! Here is where you'll not only brighten the image; you can also **add color to black and white pictures**, like I do to my old horror movie images! It works like this: the image on the right is the one that will show the new changes you make to it. The left one is the original. Now for some reason if you mess up the new image just click **Set Default Values** at the bottom left and it will put all of the values back to 0. Just don't click **Apply To Original** until you are absolutely sure that's the way you want your new photo to look! Let's take you through each slider and see what it does! (1.) **Brightness:** I put it on 60 and it lightened zombie girl up……

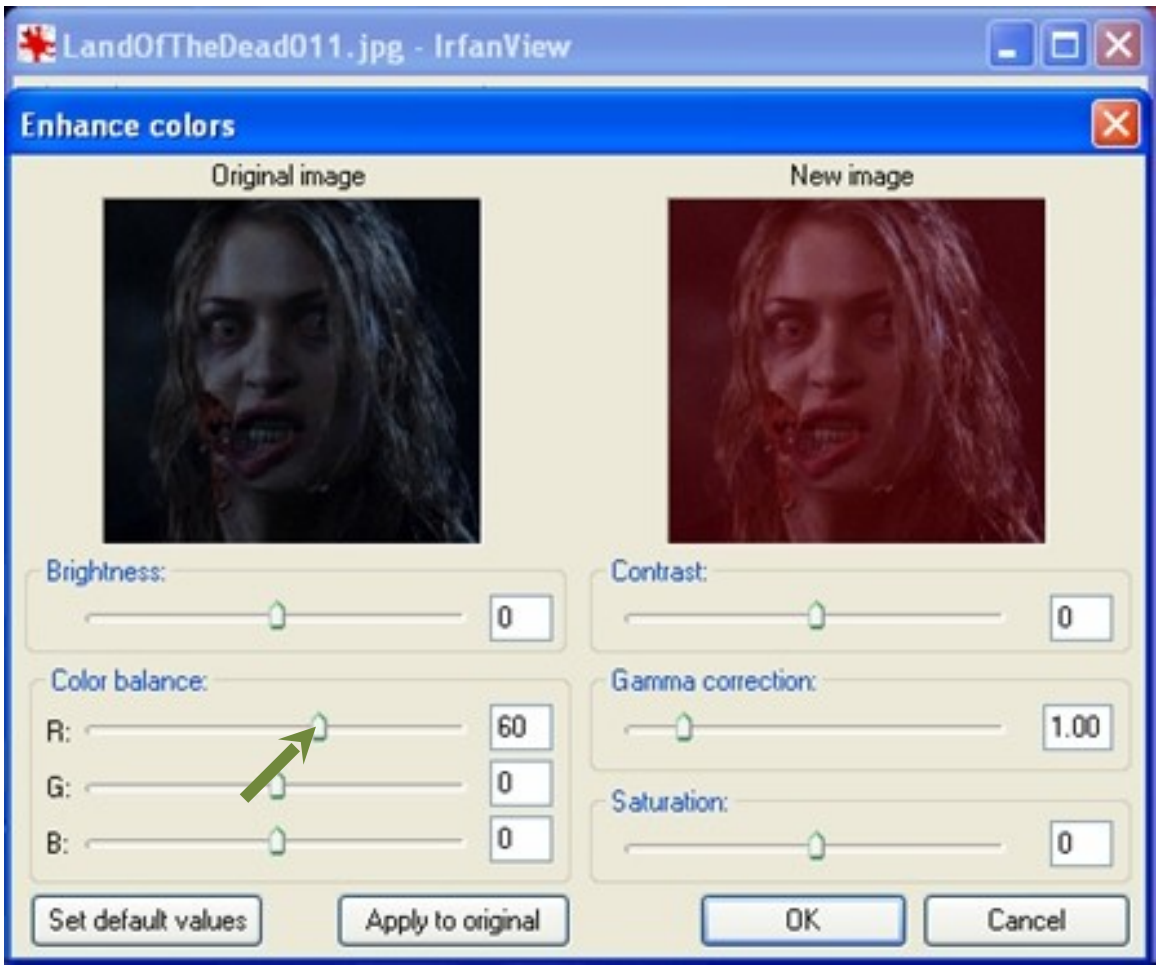

LandOfTheDead011.jpg - IrfanView
Enhance colors
Original image
New image
Brightness:
60
Contrast:
0
Color balance:
R:
0
G:
0
B:
0
Gamma correction:
1.00
Saturation:
0
Set default values
Apply to original
OK
Cancel

(2.) **Contrast:** I think this setting looks much better for this picture. I reduced the contrast to -61. It's a little less hazy then the former Brightness setting. This one's a keeper (below).

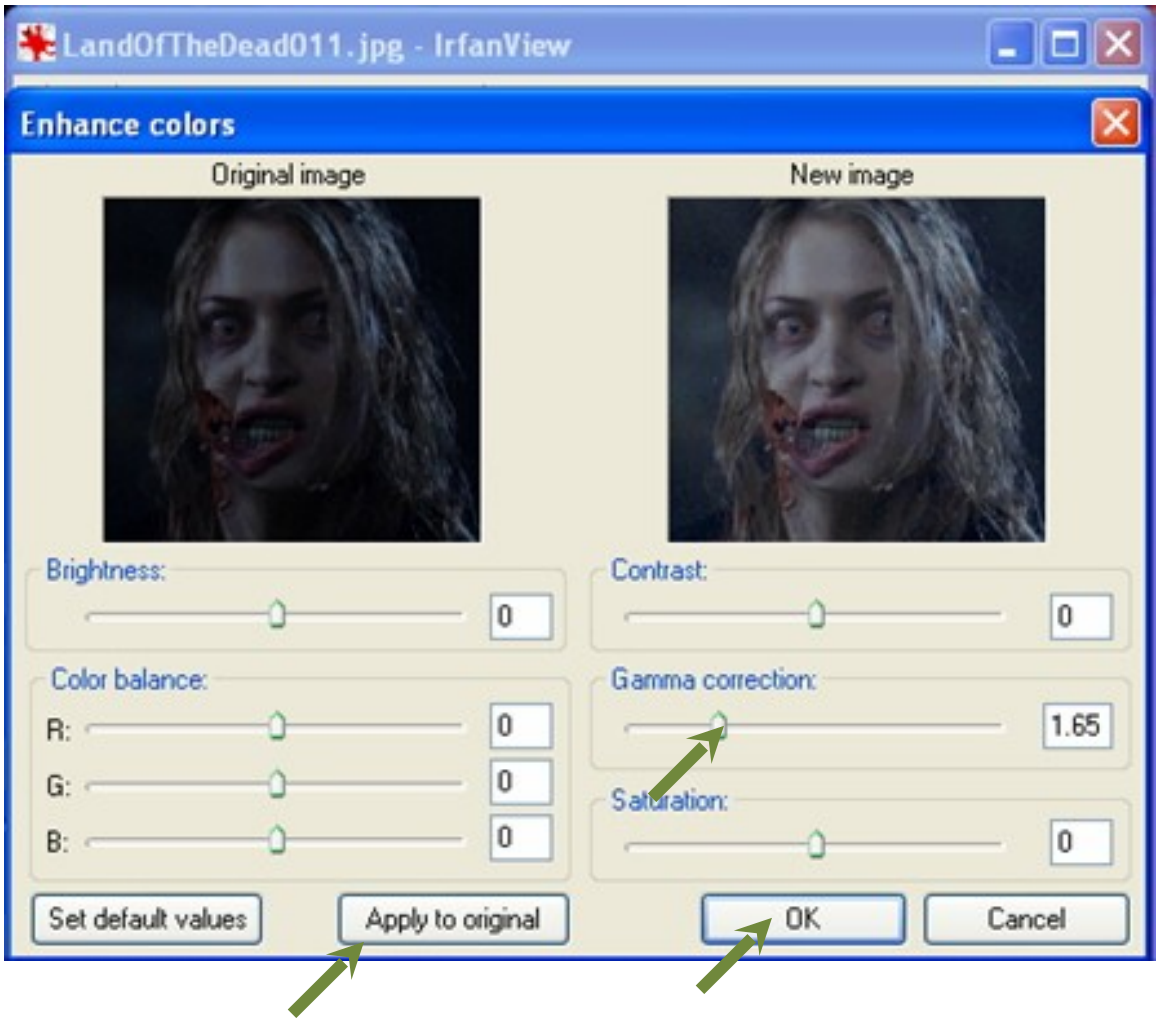


(3.) **Color Balance:** As you can see, I moved the Red color to 60 and it reddened zombie

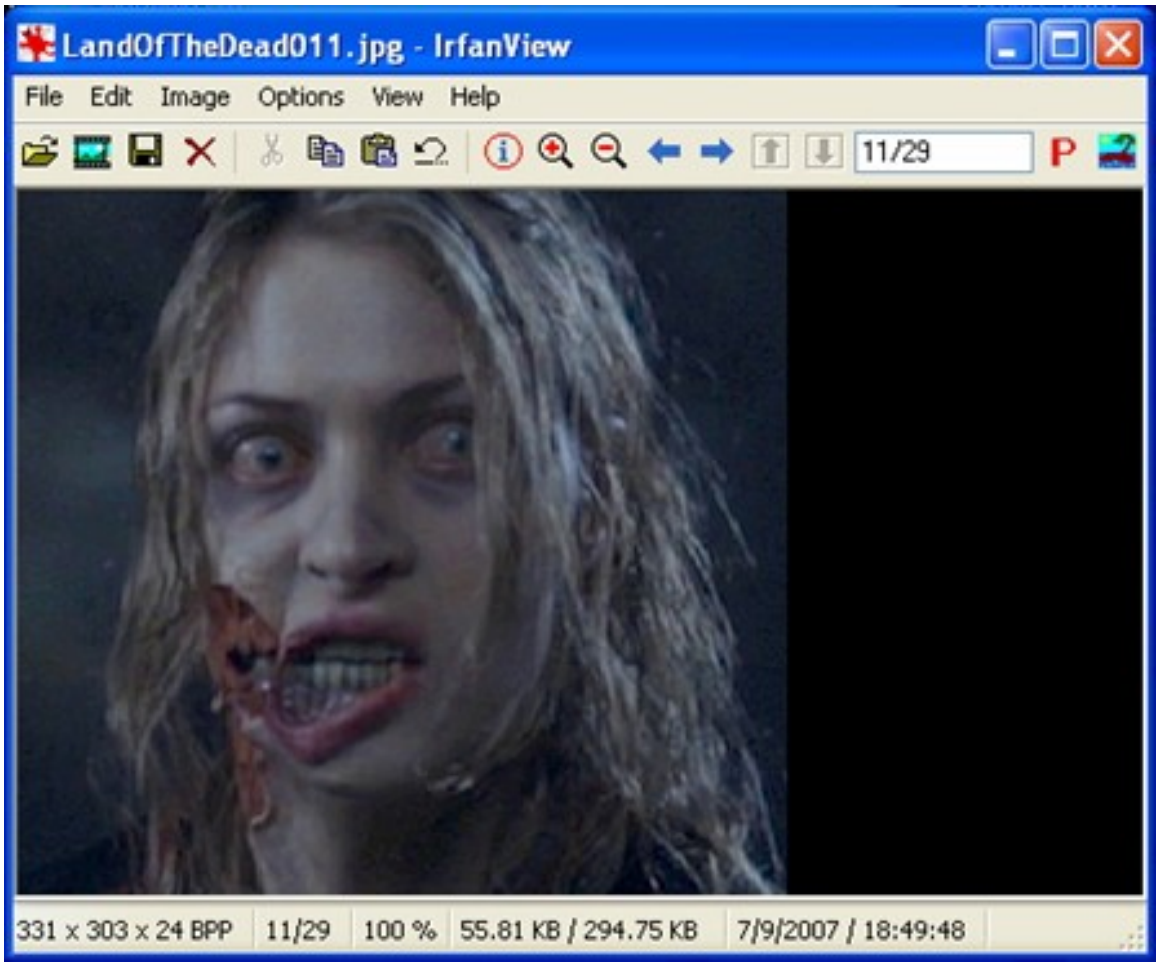
girl up, completely altering the original color of the picture……



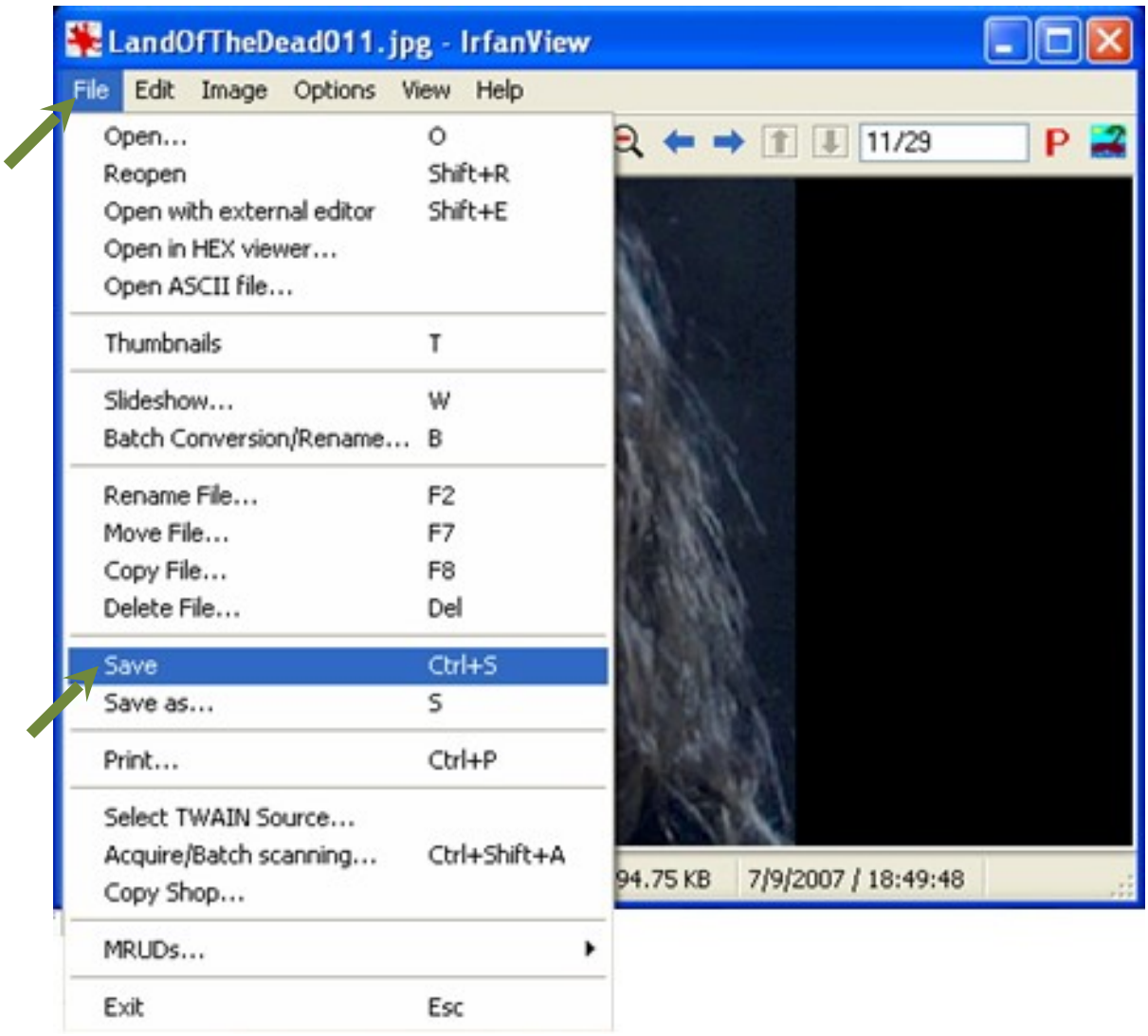
The R, G, and B on the left in the **Color Balance Box** stand for Red, Green, and Blue. Play with those sliders and see how it changes your pictures. *** I use these sliders for B&W pictures.** (4.) **Gamma:** Ok I thought Gamma was what turned Bruce Banner into the Hulk, but would you believe I have no idea what this feature is?! When I slide it to 1.65, it seems like it sharpened the image up considerably. Cool!



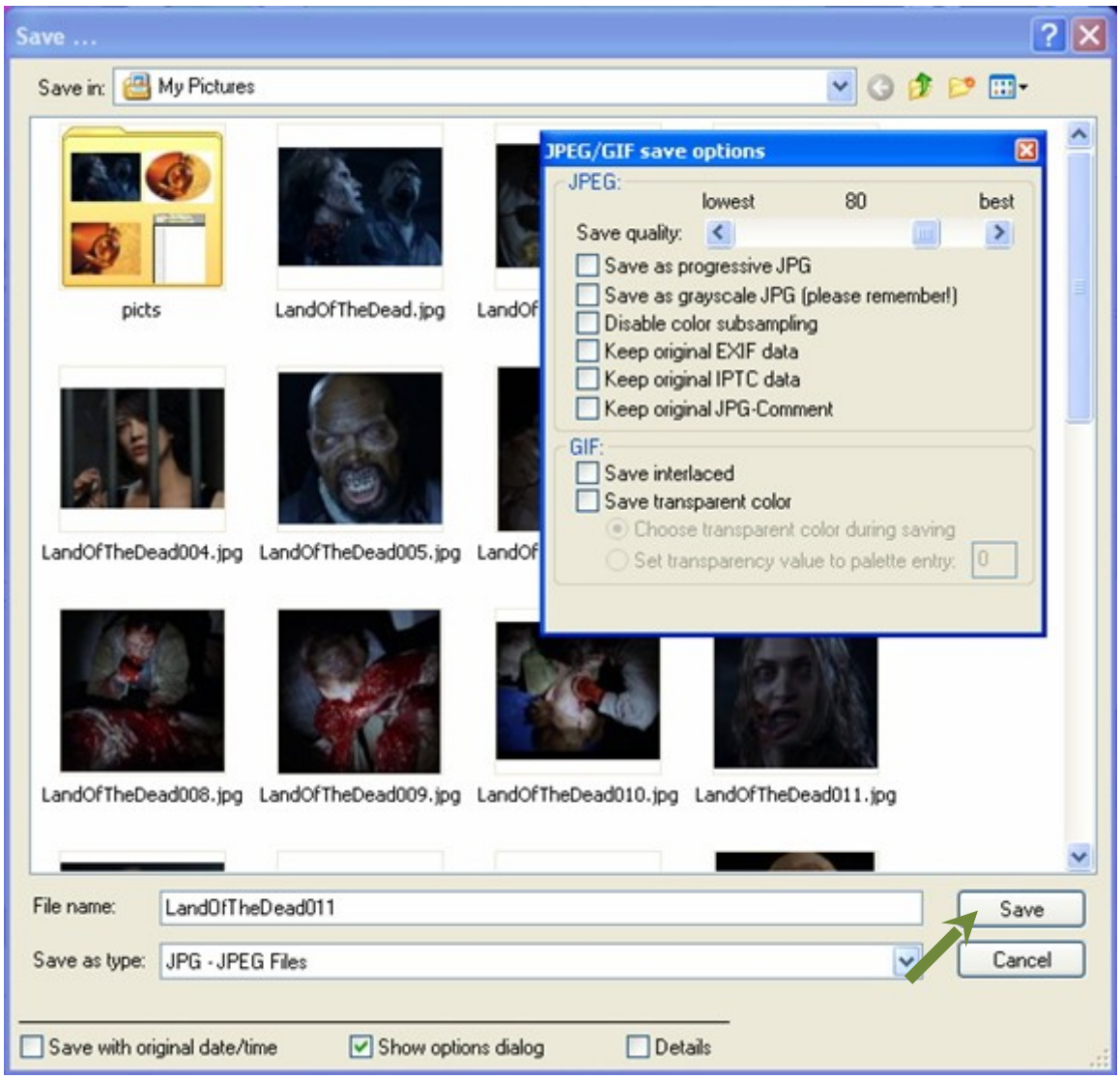
Ok, I clicked **Apply To Original** and hit **OK**. This is a far better picture than what I started with. After all, I want my customers to see all of the gory details……


LandOfTheDead011.jpg - IrfanView
File Edit Image Options View Help
11/29
331 x 303 x 24 BPP
11/29
100 %
55.81 KB / 294.75 KB
7/9/2007 / 18:49:48

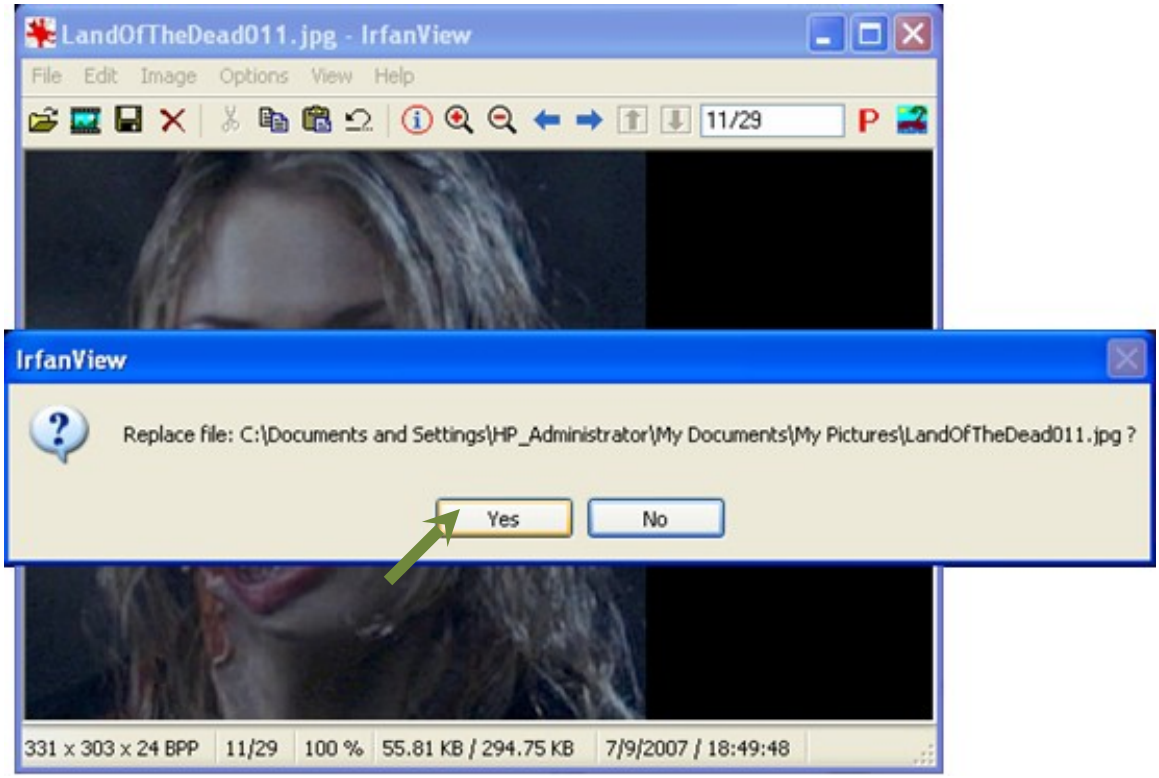
Click **File**, and then **Save**.



Up will pop your **My Pictures** box and another **Save Option Box**……



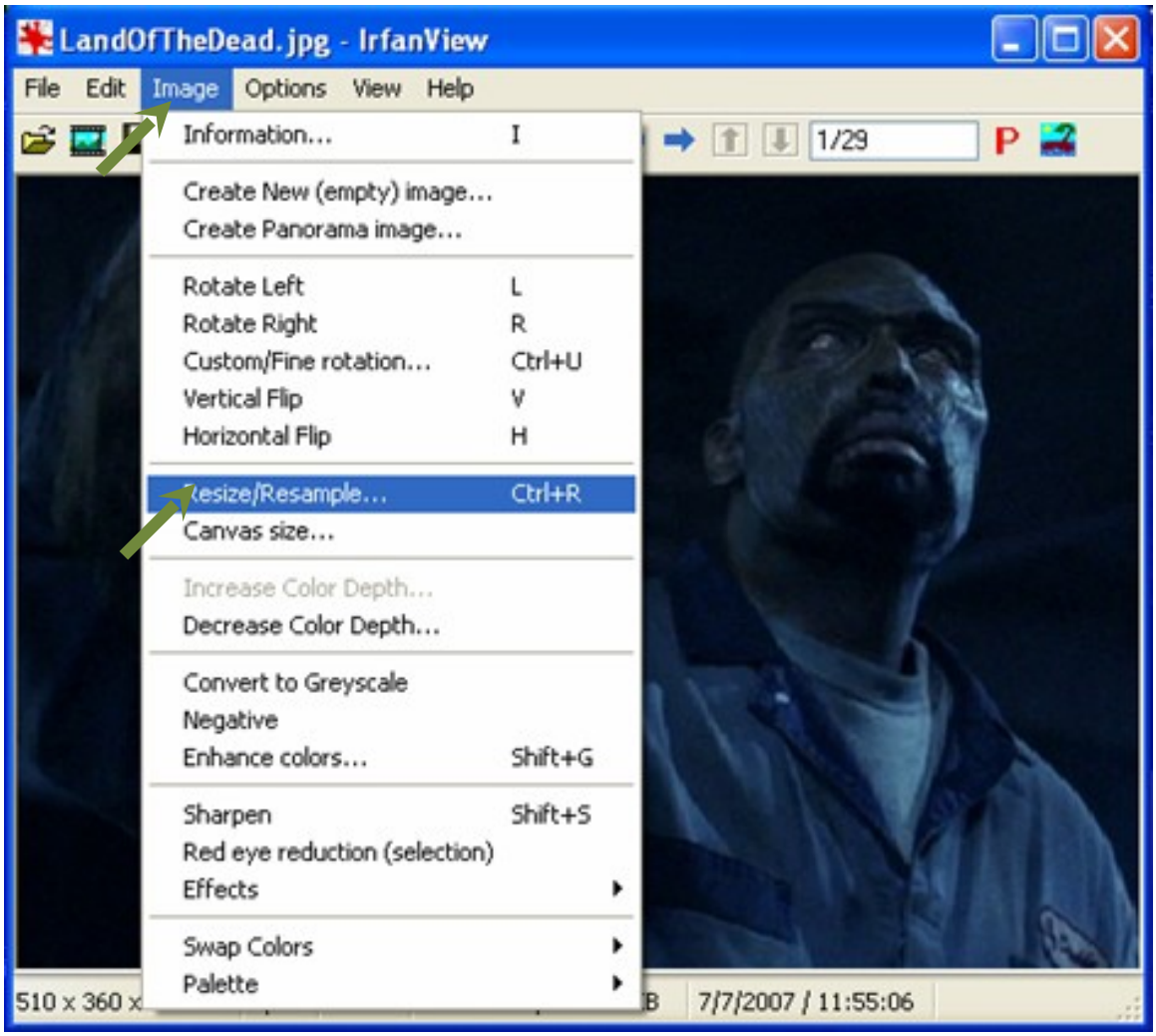
Ignore that one and just click **Save** on your **My Pictures** box. An IrfanView "**replace file**" question will pop up asking if you want to replace the original zombie girl picture file. Click **Yes**……



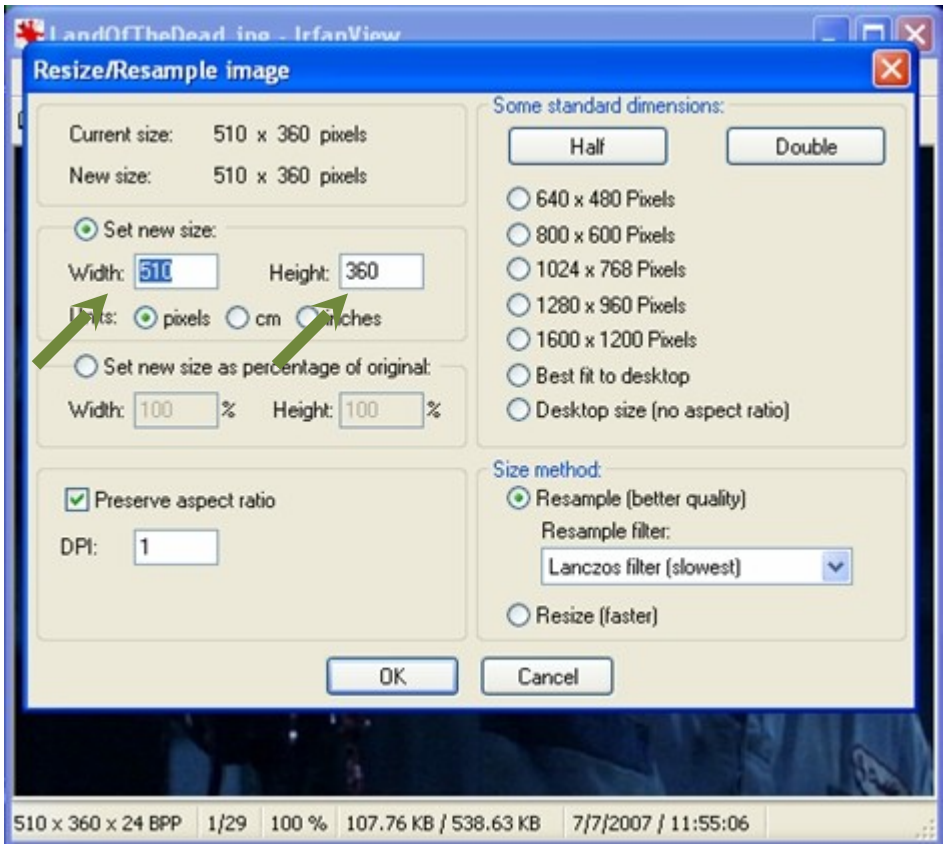
You'll be saving the picture that you altered.

Resizing A Big Picture To A Small Picture

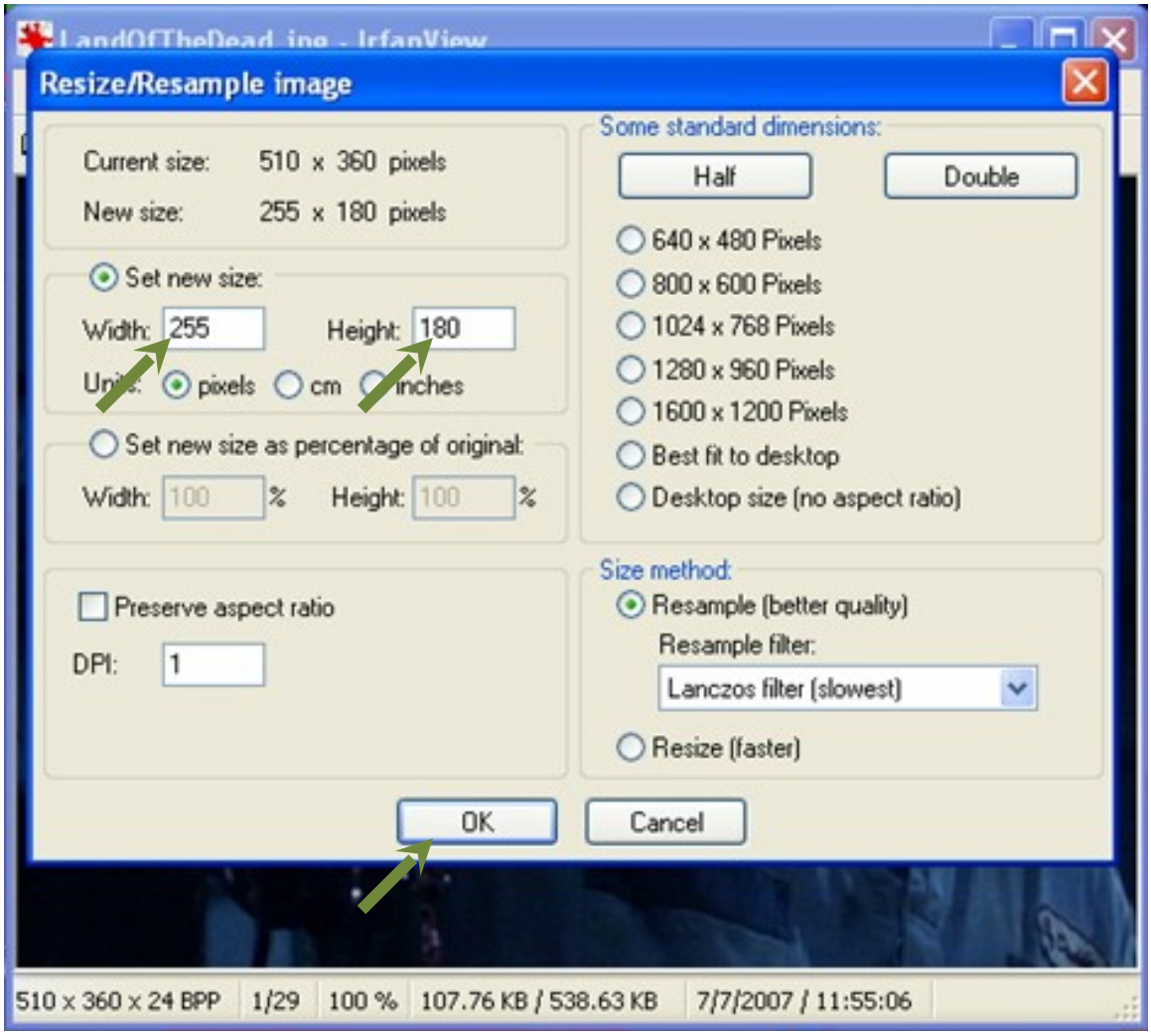
Let's resize a photo. Why, do you ask? Well, sometimes you'll run into a photo that you want to use in your **Photo Mix** program but it just doesn't fit well without cutting off things in the photo and ruining the whole horror you're trying to convey. It's just better to make that picture smaller. Why throw it away? Ok, click **File**, and **Open**. **My Pictures** will pop up. I picked this one of **Land Of The Dead's Big Daddy** holding a zombie buddies shot off head! It was too wide to get in a wallpaper well. Click **Image** then **Resize/Resample**.



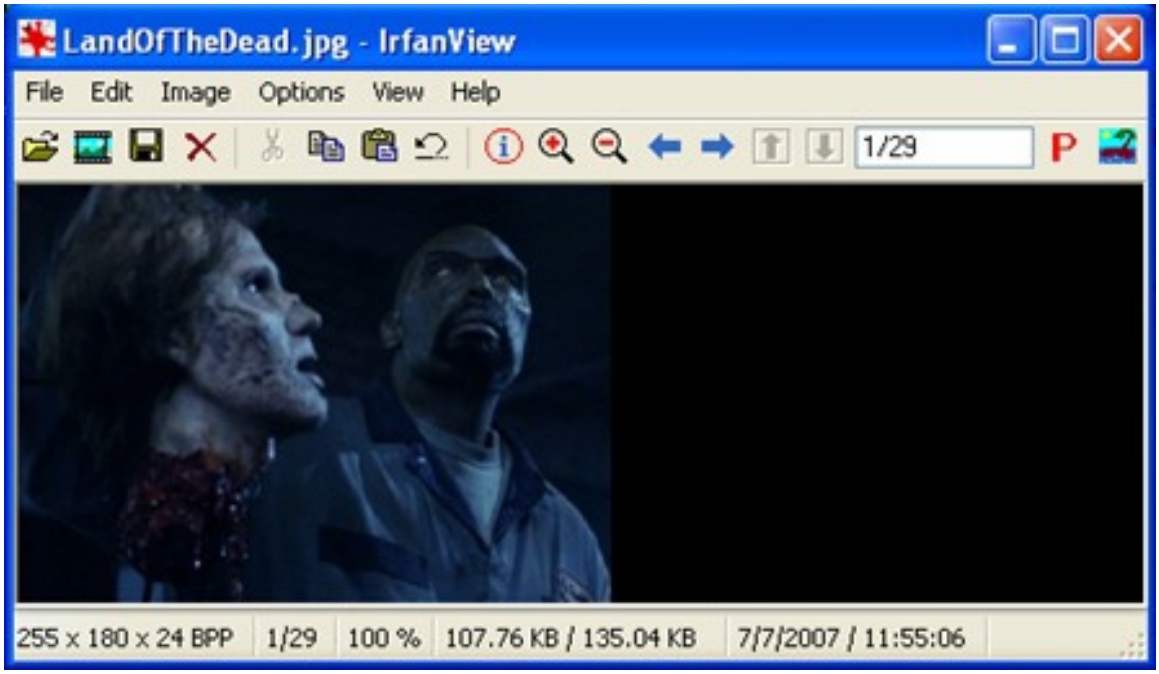
The **Resize/Resample** image box will pop up showing you the settings that you can manipulate to alter the size of the picture.



It shows you the current size of the picture which is 510 Width X 360 Height. Let's say for example you want to cut this in half……



I changed the width to 255 (half of 510) and the height to 180 (half of 360). Whatever you do to the width you should also cut the height by the same amount to keep the picture in proportion. Simply hit ok and your picture will be reduced to a size that you can easily fit into a smaller template space in your **Photo Mix** project (below)!



Oh yes, don't forget to do a **File** then **Save** on that resized image!

Last Thoughts

As you play around with these programs, you'll learn a lot more about them. Remember, they are free except for **Photo Mix** and **Capture Wiz**, which give you a thirty day free trial to check them out. You could make a lot of wallpapers in thirty days! They are good programs, however, reasonably priced and handy! Don't be afraid to experiment with them and remember, whatever you do in a program isn't set in stone until you hit **Save**! You'll always find some sort of **Undo** key too, so you can go back and do it over if you screw up. Don't freak out like I used to! No worries! If you should decide you'd like **Photo Mix** and **Capture Wiz**, come back and click on my link in the **Part One: Locating Your Software** portion of this PDF, won't you? Enjoy this EBook. I had a lot of fun creating it. Also, don't forget to come and visit www.horrorstew.com, the place for horror trailers, wallpaper, horror movies, masks, fangs, horror lenses and much more!

Have Fun!

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