

Software Review: **Adobe Photoshop CS**

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Adobe Photoshop CS...New Name, Stirring Acclaim

There are few things in life we can count on with regularity. I'm not quite referring to taxes as much as to the perpetual upgrade gyration the software industry makes us endure. Adobe is an exception to this rule. Adobe rarely upgrades its products unless they have bonafide reasons to significantly improve or innovate their offerings. Such is the case with the brand new Adobe Photoshop CS (for you old timers, you can think of it as Photoshop 8). Just so we are all on the same page, the CS designation stands for "Creative Suite." Adobe's three other recently released design tools also bear the "CS" title: Illustrator CS, InDesign CS, and GoLive CS. You can purchase them separately or bundled together. Bundled it's called the "Adobe Creative Suite Standard or Premium Edition." But this review is all about the stand alone Photoshop CS, so let's get started.

Photoshop CS New Features

One reason I couldn't wait to get my hands on the new Photoshop CS is because it's one of the first applications optimized to take full advantage of Intel's Hyper Threading Technology. The box even shows the Icon "Runs Great on Intel P4 HT" logo. Well that suits my Alienware 3.2 GHz HT review computer just swell! Needless to say, this version tore through every batch processing and Gaussian Blur experiment I threw at it. Along with the responsive performance there's much more to Photoshop CS. I boast amateur skills in Photoshop, so I'm telling you about new features which are whiz bang, (although some may disagree with me) such as the Shadow Highlight correction to preserve those midtones of shadows—ahh! Here we go...text on a path is nothing new, but in Photoshop CS it's much easier to edit thanks to a brand new text engine. Another slick feature is the ability to effortlessly change the color in any area of your image while retaining the original shading and texture thanks to the new Color Replacement tool. Also new is "Photomerge." This feature lets you create panoramas on the fly, complete with perspective adjustment. The enhanced File Browser is completely customizable and you can add keywords and metadata. The new Filter Gallery shows all Photoshop CS filters with one easy to use dialog box. Here you can apply multiple filters in a nice large preview area to see how they look before committing. Want more? Here's a cool one that just helped me with my business cards. It's called the "Match Color" feature. It reads and interprets the color data from one image (or layer) and allows you to apply it to another for guaranteed color consistency. New features also take advantage of 16-bit editing. If you're a serious photographer, you'll love the overhauled Camera Raw Plug-In. You photo buffs can have direct access to every bit of data including lens, calibration, and histogram stats (at last count, Adobe's site showed 36 digital cameras that support Raw File format).

Is Photoshop CS Easier to Use?

Well, to be perfectly honest...it's still a steep learning curve. But I can say Adobe has taken unprecedented steps to acclimate the new user to the granddaddy of image editing programs. For newbie's, I recommend taking a good look at the "Welcome Screen" dialog box (and leave the box checked to show it at startup). The Welcome Screen lets you access learning the basics, new features overview, tips and tricks, and other valuable resources on-line. You can always find the Welcome Screen from the help menu should you need it. Also, bundled in the jewel case is the second CD: Photoshop CS Video Workshop Training. The roughly one hour of training is from Total Training's Deke McClelland. It's not an exhaustive training of Photoshop CS by any means, but it's a good watch for getting up to speed. The included 350 page Photoshop CS Users Guide is another great reference.

Do The Upgrade

Photoshop CS is really a worthwhile upgrade. I just skimmed the surface. Scott Kelby, noted Photoshop guru and best selling author of *Photoshop Down & Dirty Tricks*, said this about Photoshop CS: "You'll work faster, have more fun, and you'll be able to do more cool things with it than ever before, so in short—it's upgrade time." You'll get Adobe's ImageReady CS bundled with it as well. Upgrade price is \$169 and full is \$649. To learn more about any Adobe product, visit their web site at www.adobe.com.

System requirements

Pentium III Processor with 192MB of RAM (256MB recommended). 280MB of available hard-disk space. Color monitor with 16-bit color or greater video card, CD-ROM drive, and you will need Internet access for product activation. If you use Win 2000 you will need Service Pack 3.