

Real Life Reviews

by Daniel M. East

Product information for "everyday" Mac users

Product: Photoshop CS for OS X

By: Adobe

MSRP: \$649 US/169 US upgrade version; academic pricing available

Street price: \$599 - 629 /149

Review date: January 3, 2004



DESCRIPTION (What's it do? What's it got?): Adobe Photoshop is the "industry standard" for photo manipulation, editing and design. Like many great Adobe applications, this one works for nearly any level of experience and for nearly any type of project -- from web to film to graphic design to photography professionals -- it is the one when you are ready for it. With a huge number of stock effects and tools, as well as many well know expansion plug-ins from a number of third party vendors, PS grows with you with a lot of creative power.

MIN. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: PowerPC® G3, G4, or G5 processor, Mac OS X v.10.2 through v.10.3, 192MB of RAM (256MB recommended), 320MB of available hard-disk space, Color monitor with 16-bit color or greater video card, 1,024x768 or greater monitor resolution, CD-ROM drive. I'd recommend at least a G4 with 256MB RAM or better and be sure your video card can handle the needs.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Right out of the gate, this new version of PS is faster. A lot faster. Performance on my trusty ol' TiBook is nearly 20 percent faster, so I can only imagine how it must run on a newer Mac. I was feeling "right at home" with the familiar Adobe interface and my favorite shortcuts intact (unlike some previous updates). The new gallery views, along with more ease of use and updated tools in ImageReady (PS partner web application bundle) make this the one to have for every professional, while being terrific for the advanced consumer.

WHAT I FOUND: Given that I have used PS since version 2.0, I really am a "learn by doing" user. I tend to "feel my way" through it. Like previous versions, I was comfortable with effects, automation and up-front controls. The first thing that grabbed my attention was, again, the speed. Not just processor performance either as the addition of the file browser, effect gallery and combination abilities for tools really adds to the ease at which this hefty application flies along.

LIKES : Well, I think the above paragraph pretty much says it all. I know that, like every version, I'll learn as I go and take advantage of tips from people like Scott Kelby and MacDesign magazine. The improvements in ImageReady are also terrific. Again, the speed is noticeable. I also like the new "file info" window format for incorporating copyright data and other metadata into the file. It is easier to do and more "common sense" in the layout. A nice surprise was that my PS 7 plug ins seem to like their new home as well.

DISLIKES : In so much as I like the visual format of Adobe products, I'd like to see the interface get a face lift. For the most part, I don't care what a product looks like as much as caring about the quality of the output; however, it is time for some tweaks to this GUI in my opinion. The menu options are a start, but the outward appearance could be brought up to date a bit for my taste. I really would like to see a different bundle option as well. A "build to order" option, for example, for any three CS titles would be a nice.

HOW DOES THIS PRODUCT COMPARE? : For the creative pro, there is no comparison. There are some great photo manipulation tools out there but none have this power, speed, ability or flexibility along with integration with their other industry-standard CS applications and third-party plug in options. They all work well together and compliment each other with an ease and reliability that is a must for anything beyond the hobbyist level.

RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND?: Save those pennies for this one, but it will be worth it. If you are doing anything from midlevel web to full out magazine productions and film/video production -- you'll want this in your arsenal.

TEST SYSTEM: Apple Titanium PowerBook G4 500 - 1Gb RAM - 10.3.2

FINAL THOUGHTS: If you know that you can't drop 600 plus dollars on this, consider GraphicConverter, PhotoStudio (found for free with .Mac accounts) or even Preview has some new options (like cropping). This is the next generation of Photoshop and it has raised the bar again. It is "the" version to have and will definitely further the transition of the name Photoshop from noun to verb...

OVERALL RATING: 4.5 out of 5 EXCELLENT

For more information, visit: <http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/main.html>

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