

GRAPHIC EXCHANGE



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Photoshop 6
Painter 6
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CorelDraw 10
Microsoft Publisher
QuickTime 5
OS X

Full color management and vectors galore offer near-perfect upgrade

Imaging Software
Adobe Photoshop 6

by Kirby Ferguson and Dan Brill

Adobe Photoshop 6 is the most ambitious and successful upgrade in the program's history, sporting a pair of long-desired features—vectors and a more intuitive type tool—as well as many other valuable additions and interface tweaks. Despite a flawed new feature and some other minor issues, Photoshop 6 is both easier to use and more powerful, a winning upgrade for beginners and advanced users.

AT LONG LAST, REAL TYPE HANDLING

One of Photoshop 6's most welcome changes—and it's been a long time coming—is the revamped Type tool, which now behaves almost identically to those in Illustrator and InDesign. You can finally enter type directly on the canvas, specifying formatting down to the character level. Paragraph type can even be set in Photo-

shop. This may sound inadvisable since running small type within a raster image makes for a fuzzy read, but vector type in Photoshop 6 remains sharp in exported PDFs as well as when output to PostScript printers (the same applies for vectors). This means Photoshop could be the only application you use for many single-page projects.

Photoshop 6 even trumps the text handling features of Illustrator and InDesign by including envelope effects, allowing you to warp text based on an array of preset shapes (although unfortunately, you can't use your own shapes). Most impressively, text even remains editable after the warping has been applied. Now why doesn't Illustrator do this?

Alas, no spell checker keeps Photoshop 6's Type tool just shy of perfection.

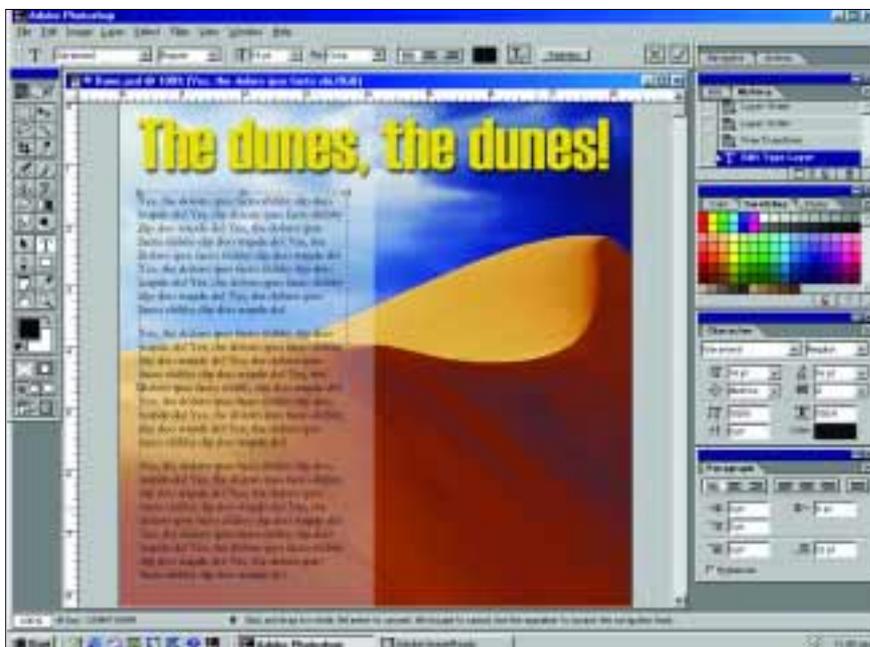
VECTORS OR SOUPED-UP CLIPPING PATHS?

One might have expected Photoshop 6's vectors to be a basic set of Illustrator-derived tools, but what we've got here is essentially a more versatile Photoshop pen tool. These vectors are actually filled layers with clipping paths; many users have been

fudging this for years by selecting and filling paths. And these are “true” vectors, which remain sharp when output to PDF or a high-res device, but most of us still export TIFFs and EPSs for placement in QuarkXPress anyway.

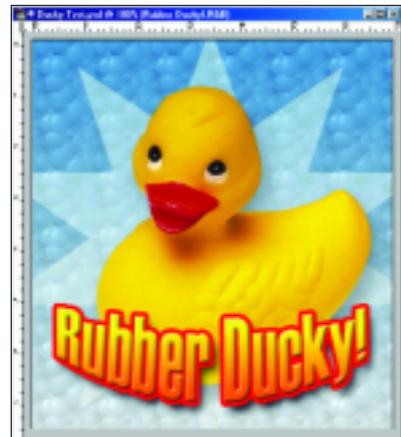
Make no mistake, Photoshop's vectors are very useful—they're just not as elegant as what we've come to expect. For instance, you can't simply select a shape and color it. Instead, you have to double-click the item's layer to specify a new fill color. To apply a stroke or gradient to a vector you have to use layer effects, a rather roundabout way of accomplishing a simple task. Then there are the numerous limitations to these vector tools (such as not being able to control the shape of line joins) that makes them more troublesome to use. (To get sharp edges on your strokes, be sure to set the position to “inside” in the Layer Effects dialog.) It would also be useful to be able to choose File>Place and drop in a vector logo, but importing like this creates a raster layer.

So why are these vectors still an essential addition to Photoshop, even though we have so many gripes with their behaviour? Well, simply put: they work. And even though they could work better, this is a feature that will get everyday usage. Hav-



(left) Photoshop's new **TYPE TOOL** is just like we always dreamed it would be—it will please anyone who has used Illustrator or InDesign.

(below) Aside from the duck, there's **NOT A RASTER** to be found in this image: the starburst is a vector; the bubbles and gradients are layer effects; the type is a vector with warping applied—and the text is still editable!



ing elements you can scale without worrying about resolution issues makes life a lot simpler. The implementation may be flawed, but the function isn't.

It's also handy to be able to make vector layers into clipping groups, a convenient means of clipping layers within Photoshop. And any shape you'd like to reuse can be defined as a custom shape, which will then appear in the shape tool's presets.

INTERFACE REFINEMENTS

The new Options bar, which relocates tool settings to an Office-like bar running across the top of the screen, conveniently positions vital options that must be constantly tweaked. Some palettes, such as those for gradients and brushes, have even been integrated into the options bar, reducing Photoshop's palette clutter. And if your monitor resolution is set above 800x600, you can stash palettes in the right-hand side of the bar.

A new bounding box feature in the Options bar makes layers work as if Free Transform is on all the time. Newbies might like this; the rest of us will want to keep it turned off.

Photoshop 6 sports dramatically improved layer management. Layers can be grouped within folders, which you can open and close to reveal their contents, as well as color-code, much like the Labels feature in the MacOS. Select a folder and you select every layer within it; drag layers in or out of the folder to group or ungroup them. It's simple, it's handy, it's tidy.

Photoshop 6 also allows you to apply gradients (and strokes, fills and more) as Layer Effects, meaning when you modify a layer, the gradient will apply to whatever you've changed. Gradient settings are now located within a dialog box, rather than a palette, which you can access by double-clicking the gradient swatch in the options bar. But like the Layer Effects dialog box mentioned later, this one takes up an excessive amount of screen space.

"Save a Copy" has been eliminated from Photoshop's File menu; you can now accomplish the same thing using plain ol'

"Save As". In addition to supporting Navigation Services—which, among other things, lets you open more than one document at a time by holding down the shift key and selecting multiple files—Photoshop 6 on the Mac lets you search your drive from within Open and Save dialogs—very handy when you forget where you put that image you wanted to open. As usual, the Mac and Windows editions of Photoshop differ only in superficial ways, though the Windows version doesn't have this search feature. File>Open Recent lets you easily open documents you've been working on recently.

There's also a raft of new options when saving a TIFF, such as transparency, layers, and different methods of compression like JPEG and ZIP (although you'll run into trouble trying to import these ultra-modern TIFF's into most programs).

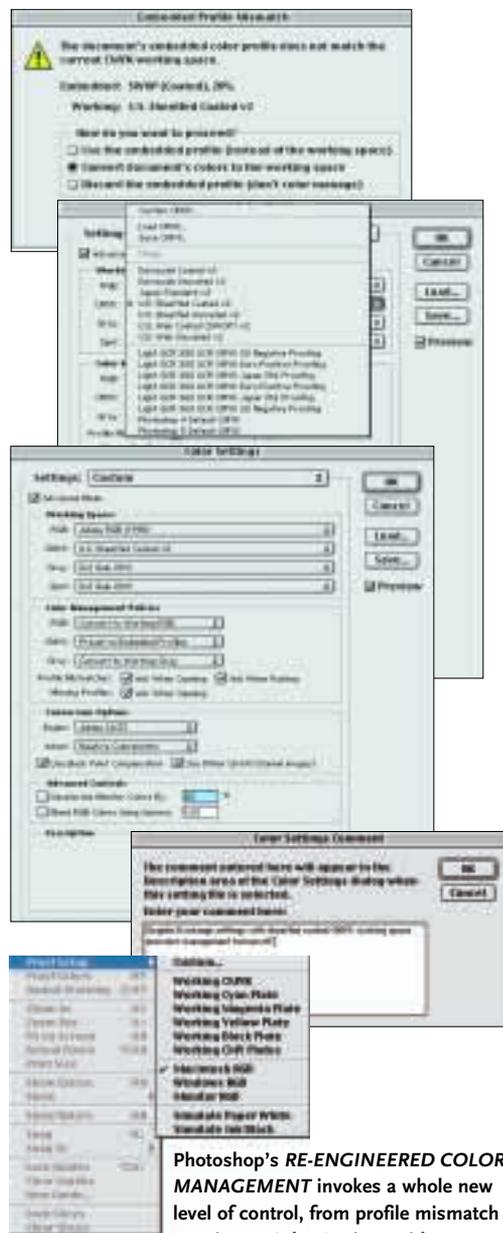
A new Preset Manager lets you change your presets for brushes, swatches and the like in one area. Unfortunately, you still can't reorder these presets.

You can now use measurement units other than pixels in some of Photoshop's value fields. For example, just add "in" after a digit for inches. Very convenient, though you can't do calculations. As well, units of measurements can now be switched with a quick control-click (Mac) or right-click (Windows) on the ruler.

COLOR MANAGEMENT

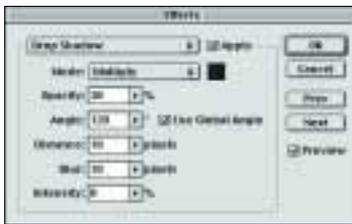
In what may rank as the most far-reaching revision to this upgrade, Adobe has done a major revamp of its color management settings; Photoshop 6 is built to work within a comprehensive ColorSync workflow, relying on ICC profiles.

Gone are the old RGB and CMYK Setup boxes, now lumped into Photoshop's new Color Settings (under the Edit menu) which actually amalgamates what were formerly six different color and print-related dialog boxes. Here we find a brand new interface that incorporates choices for your RGB and CMYK Working Spaces as well as dot gain preferences or monitor gamma definitions for black and



Photoshop's *RE-ENGINEERED COLOR MANAGEMENT* invokes a whole new level of control, from profile mismatch warning to Color Settings with comprehensive RGB and CMYK Working Spaces and Custom setups with user-definable comments. A new Proof Setup dialog has also been added.

white (Gray) work and dot gain settings for spot colors (thankfully, Adobe has not tinkered with absolute dot gain values as was the case when Photoshop moved from version 4 to version 5). Color Management Policy lets you decide what to do when opening documents with attached profiles or no profile at all (either to Preserve Embedded Profile or Convert to Working Color Space). And version 6 now



The new **LAYER EFFECTS DIALOG** is powerful—but huge. Just compare it to the old one.



supports document-specific color, letting you open and display multiple files in different RGB Working Spaces, correcting a crucial flaw in version 5.

The Advanced mode reveals Adobe's new label for its Color Management System (CMS), now called ACE (Adobe Color Engine)—what was formerly called "Built-in". ACE is already part of Illustrator 9 and will be included in the next versions of both InDesign and Acrobat, giving the full Adobe graphics suite consistent color conversion across all applications.

When you mouse over any of the terms in the Color Settings dialog box, Photoshop conveniently provides a description of the term down below. A number of default color management setups are included, ranging from standard ColorSync Workflow to Web Graphics and U.S. Prepress. Changing any part of a default setup renames it a Custom setup and allows you to name it and save it—with your own description recorded for reference. This file becomes a .csf (Color Settings File) located in your System folder and may also be handed off to another user.

Although Photoshop still lets us operate with color management turned off, its new unified controls may finally tempt the way to experiment with a color managed workflow. (For an excellent detailed description of Color Settings, check out Andrew Rodney's article at www.imaginginside.com.)

Last but not least, the new Proof Setup pulldown menu compliments Color Settings with both print and screen settings for CMYK or RGB, including a long list of custom proofing options.

SMALLER CHANGES

Of the remaining Photoshop 6 changes, the most substantial is its overhauled Layer Effects. Effects are now applied in the fashion of ImageReady, each becoming a sublayer in the Layers palette. You can also now apply different bevel contours and texture fills and save your settings as styles, which you can quickly apply to other layers. Unfortunately, this new Layer Effects dialog box is huge and covers much of your image; the smaller dialog in Photoshop 5 gave you more space to view your image while tinkering with settings. (Since double-clicking a layer now presents you with the Effects palette, you must now Option/Alt-double-click to name a layer.)

The primitive masking feature which made its debut in Photoshop 5.5 has been improved in 6, but still doesn't compete with third-party plugins. For simple masks, though, it does the trick (and remember: it's always necessary to use Layers>Matting to eliminate the edge of stray pixels left behind on the edge of the mask).

You can attach annotations to Photoshop 6 images, readable by anyone with Acrobat Reader when you export a PDF—a convenient way of proofing images to a client. These show up as small post-it notes that anyone can double-click to view. True techies, you can even include voice annotations.

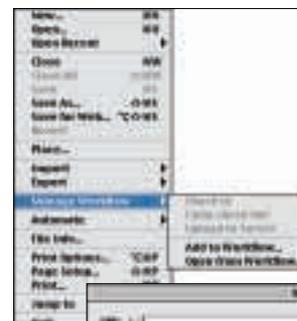
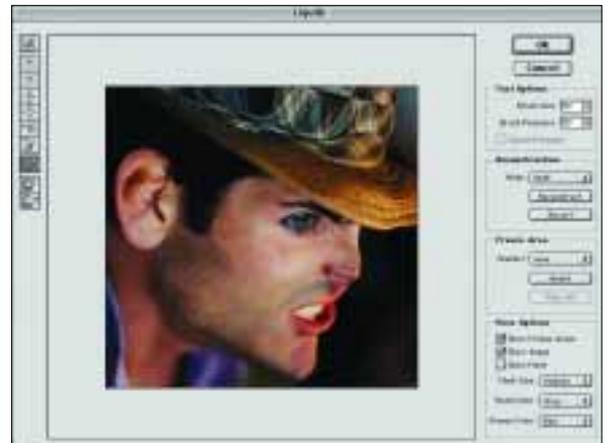
The Crop tool now grays out the area surrounding your selection, giving you a better idea of how your cut will affect the image. You can also crop to non-rectangular shapes, meaning after you've isolated an item you can instantly crop to it. Nice. A new Trim command quickly slices away excess transparent and solid-colored areas surrounding an image. Again, nice.

If you're a big Actions user, you can now create droplets. Simply drag-and-drop an item onto a droplet and the action will apply to it, a boon for the highly efficient among us.

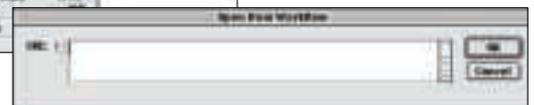
A new Gradient Map function replaces shades of gray with the shades you define in a gradient, which can create some other-worldly color schemes.

Liquify lets you apply Goo-ish effects, allowing you to push, pull, smudge and smear images as if they're made of gel. This has potentially evil applications. For some reason, panning and zooming didn't

The new **LIQUIFY COMMAND** lets you cruelly distort the visages of male models.



Photoshop's new **MANAGE WORKFLOW MENU** is tied to the new WebDAV server standard for use in a distributed workflow. It will be the protocol upon which Adobe's workflow products such as InScope are based.





IS IT PHOTOSHOP OR IS IT IMAGEREADY? It's getting harder and harder to tell. Animation features and Web-specific previews make ImageReady a necessity for producing Web images, but Photoshop is poised to eat its young.

work in this preview window.

Under the File menu we now find a toggle called Manage Workflow. We were unsure of its function, so we checked with Adobe Photoshop 6 product manager Kevin Connor. He explained that the Manage Workflow menu "allows you to check files in and out of a WebDAV server. WebDAV is a new protocol that stands for Web Distributed Authoring and Versioning. At this time, there aren't a lot of WebDAV servers in use, but that will probably change quickly. WebDAV is also the server standard that will be used by upcoming Adobe workflow products, such as Adobe InScope."

IMAGEREADY 3: THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

First came bundling, now copped features—the next step might well be outright assimilation.

With the addition of the Slice tool and Styles palette to its repertoire, Photoshop is clearly impinging on ImageReady, the Web optimization application bundled with Photoshop as of version 5.5. The distinction between these two applications is now fuzzier than ever—there is so much

redundancy, it seems silly to maintain them as separate applications.

Most of the changes to ImageReady 3 are just carryovers from Photoshop 6. New features unique to ImageReady are modest: improved integration with Photoshop (no more of those annoying messages about the file being modified elsewhere); images open in either application gray out while you work in the other, so you don't get confused and use the wrong window; weighted optimization lets you specify different optimization settings for channel-defined areas; you can preview rollovers right on the canvas.

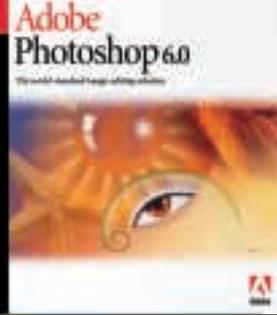
With its animation and rollover features, as well as integrated Web-specific previews, ImageReady remains a necessary tool for the production of Web images—but just barely. Integrate a few more features into Photoshop and it's curtains for this program. Prediction: this is the last upgrade of ImageReady; look for it to be folded into Photoshop 7.

FINAL WORD

Aside from Photoshop 6's flawed-but-welcome implementation of vectors and ImageReady's disintegrating sense of purpose,

it's difficult to find fault with this upgrade. The new features are useful and thoughtfully executed, the learning curve is minimal, and it's a great value—there are a lot of new features packed in here. And even in its beta form, Photoshop 6 was stable and well-behaved (although we hope some quirks with the Type tool will be ironed out of the final version).

Its type and vector tools alone make Photoshop 6 a solid upgrade, not to mention valuable additions like the Options bar and new layer tools. If you only purchase one upgrade this year, Photoshop 6 should be it. ■



ADOBE PHOTOSHOP 6

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Macintosh
 PowerPC-based Macintosh computer
 Apple System Software version 8.5, 8.6 or 9.0
 64 MB of available RAM
 125 MB of available hard-disk space
 CD-ROM drive

Windows
 Intel Pentium class or compatible processor
 Microsoft Windows 98, NT 4.0, 2000 or Millennium
 64 MB of available RAM for Windows 98
 125 MB of available RAM for Windows NT 4.0
 CD-ROM drive

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