

GRAPHIC EXCHANGE



Face TO Face

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The artist's Photoshop

Imaging Software
Adobe Photoshop 7.0

by Ron Giddings

"I bought it and carried it to my room and began to fool around with it. It fascinated me, first as a passion, then as an obsession. (It) was waiting for me by predestination and I took to it as a musician takes to a piano or a painter to a canvas. I found I was the master of the elements, that I could work miracles; that I could do things which had never been done before."

Alfred Stieglitz, 1883

Although Stieglitz was talking about a camera, many of us felt the same way about *Photoshop* when we first started playing with it. Now in its seventh incarnation, it has become the world's de facto imagemaking software. Used initially for photomanipulation and collage, it has grown into a genuine artist's toolset.

Even better, building on its uncluttered and easy-to-use interface, *Photoshop* has been able to absorb third party filters and a constantly growing library of features without usurping any additional on-screen real estate.

THE PAINTER'S PHOTOSHOP

Adobe has now completely overhauled *Photoshop 7's* painting engine, with some programming from Jerry Harris, co-developer of *PixelPaint*. We now have a rich palette of dynamic and interactive brushes. Even the brush sizes go up to a staggering 2500 pixels!

Liquify has moved into Filters and

has grown into a formidable distortion tool, now including multiple undos. Another important feature is the fact that all layers are visible while working on one layer. And a brand new addition to Image Adjustments is the rather remarkable Auto Color. With one click, colors can be enriched and restored, and contrast improved. This is going to be used by a lot of people.

Web designers and illustrators will enjoy the new Pattern Maker, a tiling and blending tool. Seamless patterns can be applied to entire images or selections. Because Pattern Maker has a built-in History, you can store favorite tile generations, up to twenty tiles at a time; these are used by the Pattern Stamp to brush textures onto an image. This is a great way to get rid of bald patches on a lawn.

Although Shapes first appeared in *Photoshop 6*, the preset library in version 7 has been expanded greatly. The ability to save layer styles, for instance, and apply them to vector illustrations within *Photoshop* is much more clearly tied into the application's overall philosophy of enabling personal customization.

IT'S AN ORGANIZER

In general, *Photoshop 7* has become very flexible in suiting the requirements of different users. For example, the inter-

Photoshop 7 now includes a FILE BROWSER (right). What, on the surface, looks like a handy way of accessing images has the potential to become a mainstay in the working environment. As well as providing thumbnails from disks or CDs, the Browser can also organize images by various criteria such as size, rank, or color space. Extremely handy is the option to BATCH RENAME an entire group of images. Photographers will immediately recognize the benefits of being able to relabel generic numbered files from a digital camera with more meaningful file names.



face layout can be saved along with your preferred Layer Styles and cropping tool settings. This bodes well for the in-house illustrator whose boss wants Aqua buttons on everything.

One thing inherited from *Photoshop Elements* is the File Browser. Users now have a direct link to all their imagery, with stored information that includes Exif data from digital cameras. Images can be retrieved from hard drives or removable media, and sorted or ranked. The ranking feature (under View by>Large with Rank) means you can classify and sort images by degree of importance and quality, or in groupings. Thumbnails can be displayed in a variety of ways by size, date, name, or even color profile. A nice little touch is the ability to rotate a thumbnail 90 degrees if it happens to be portrait.

One of my personal favourite interface features in *Photoshop 6* was the Option

bar that had space for docking palettes. Now even the Option bar can be collapsed down into a small button when not in use. This has forever changed the time-honoured tradition of burying your image under a dozen floating palettes.

And if other people are using your *Photoshop*, being able to save your preferred workspace is a blessing.

LET THE HEALING BEGIN

Two of *Photoshop's* most exciting new tools are the Healing Brush and the Patch Tool. Expanding on the capabilities of the cloning tool to a large degree, the Healing Brush has been modified to apply only the texture from one selected area to another.

Photoshoppers are familiar with the "soft donut" look created by overusing the cloning tool. At first, the Healing Brush appears to be doing exactly the same thing, but after a couple of seconds it

translates the new applied texture to blend much more smoothly into the new background. The advantages of this for scratch and dust removal are obvious. The repeating clone pattern is a thing of the past.

The Patch Tool works in a similar fashion, except that small selections from a clear area can be dragged onto and applied to a damaged area. I found that any unwanted shifts in tone could be reduced using the Fade slider located under the Edit menu.

OUTPUT—PRINT AND THE WEB

Photoshoppers who use the Internet to send soft proofs to clients will be pleased about two new formats that *Photoshop 7* offers. Although PDFs and TIFFs were supported in earlier versions, this upgrade lets you retain these formats with layers intact. When you save as TIFF, *Photoshop* now gives you a choice of image compres-



An instant hit will be *Photoshop 7's* **AUTO COLOR** function. Instead of messing with levels and saturation, the Photoshopper can simply enrich tones and colors with one click. Magical as this seems (see the Bruegel painting at right taken from a Photo CD), it does have its limitations. Extremely off-color pictures can be overcompensated, as in the green tree trunk above. Simply playing with the Fade function can restore a more believable color balance. Still, for the majority of pictures, this is a stunning addition to the toolset.



sion and layer compression (RLE or ZIP). This represents a considerable reduction in file size over the full PSD format.

Version 7 now takes advantage of Acrobat 5's security settings. For instance, a *Photoshop* PDF can be encrypted and passworded so that printing or alterations to the file are not allowed. And just as with Save as TIFF, all layers can be included.

With the advent of inexpensive inkjet printers, more and more people are outputting their own final prints. Portrait and yearbook photographers have always been able to get prints with different sizes on the same sheet. *Photoshop* 7 now includes a Picture Package that lets users print a 5 x 7" and eight wallet-size pictures on one 8 x 10" sheet. As well, labels or text can be added, and the files saved as either flattened or layered. Small but necessary improvements have been made—Contact Sheet has added more text handling features, and Web Gallery now has more and better templates.

IMAGEREADY GETS BUSY

Many of us have wondered why *ImageReady* hasn't been folded right into *Photoshop*. But we'll have to be satisfied that it has been

renumbered from "3" to "7". Apparently there are many web designers who use *ImageReady* on its own; however, any critical color corrections will still have to be done in *Photoshop*.

Having said that, we should note that *ImageReady* has changed the way it translates pictures into GIFs—you can now assign transparency to any particular color. This is much handier than the old way of floating a cutout image on a transparent background.

An especially interesting solution has been found for gradient transparency in GIFs. A fine dither pattern is applied to elements such as soft drop shadows. This allows you to create a logo with a drop shadow that works on different colored backgrounds; previously it was necessary to place that logo on a different color for each page.

A new format has appeared called WBMP, a black-and-white dithered version of your picture. This can be used to present an image that downloads quickly and lets viewers know that something is happening while they're waiting for the color version to appear on-screen.

Perhaps the most interesting change in *ImageReady's* color translation is its ability to discern between what should be saved as a GIF, such as text or flat areas of color, and what should be saved as a JPEG. I'm not quite sure how this works, but I can see the point of retaining the clarity that GIF would provide over bitmapped or anti-aliased text.



One new feature of *LIQUIFY* is a button that shows the effect of your distortions in the form of a mesh (left). This mesh is savable, which means one can experiment on a low-res version, save the mesh, and apply it to a high-res version.

ROTATIONS

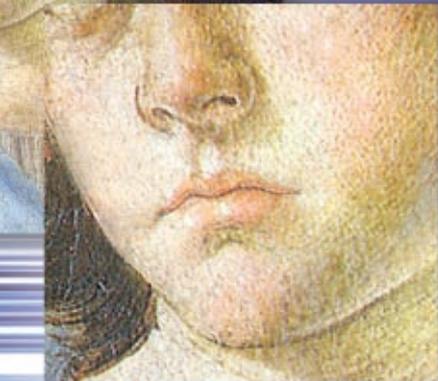
BLURS



Don't worry about dust and scratches when there are huge cracks in your face.

Photoshop 7's amazing **HEALING BRUSH** transfers texture from a smooth area to eliminate such problems. In the painting on

the left, for example, I was able to retain the brush strokes of the painting while cleaning up the various cracks in the paint surface. Using the cloning tool would probably have resulted in repeating patterns or fuzzy "donuts" when working in such tight quarters.



Speaking of which, there is now a new level of anti-aliasing called Sharp which works extremely well with very small type.

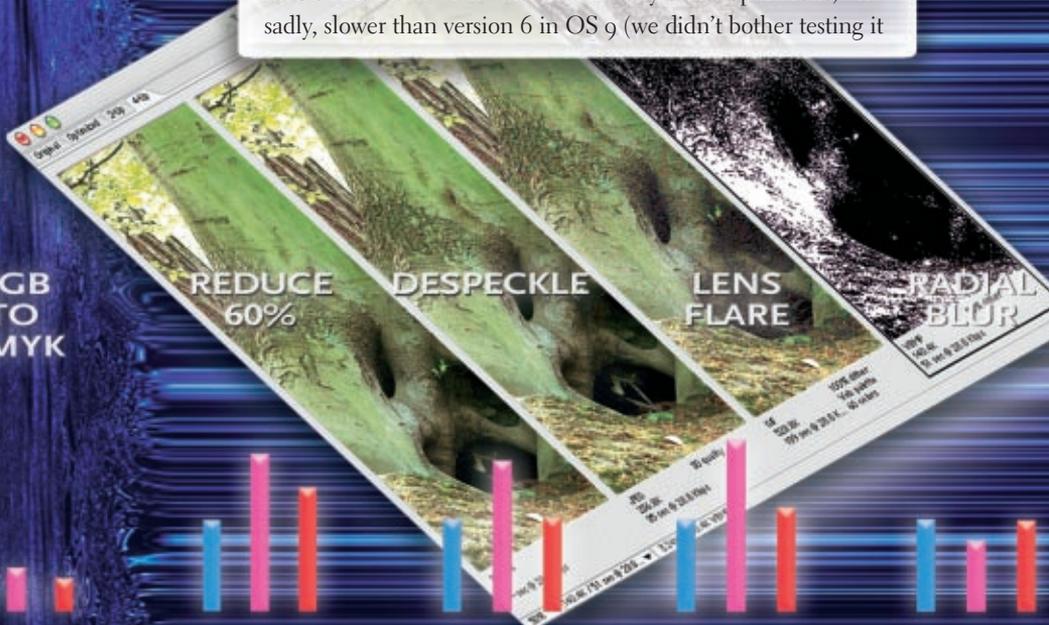
Many will be happy at the changes to rollover creation in *ImageReady 7*. I always found *ImageReady 3*'s use of both a timeline and layers incredibly frustrating. Clicking on a layer would inevitably result in unwanted changes to GIF animations. The new setup is much more intuitive and allows you to see your entire picture while making slices.

WHY OS X? WHY NOT.

The biggest news for Mac users is, of course, the fact that *Photoshop 7* is carbonized for OS X. We now have web-like rollovers appearing on many of the buttons—transparency is everywhere. Even the image box has a little color image that tells you that you've applied a filter. But is there more to *Photoshop* in OS X than a pretty face?

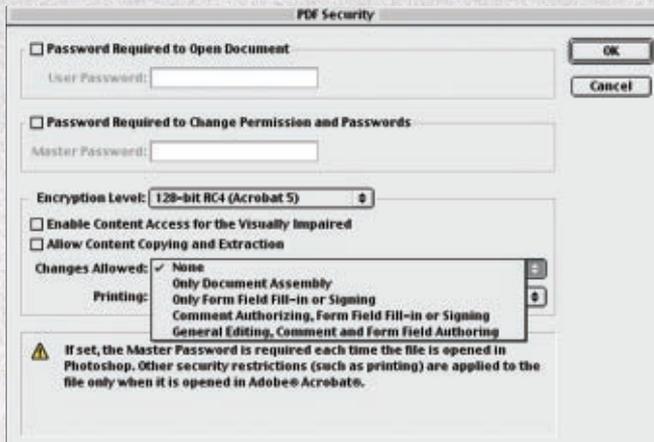
Although I have been working with a beta version, I decided to test the speed of *Photoshop 7* using the time-honoured *PSbench* (www.geocities.com/Paris/Cafe/4363/download.html). Written originally for *Photoshop 6*, *PSbench* is a series of Actions that takes a 50 MB image through various filters and transforms them so that the user can establish average times for these functions. I conferred with John at *PSbench* as to the validity of using these Actions with version 7, and he pointed out only that if the operating system has taken over from *Photoshop*, we might see some anomalies. I worried a bit about the RGB-CMYK conversion, knowing that OS X now incorporates ColorSync, but found no disturbing results.

On our graph below, the times for each benchmarking test in *Photoshop 6* represent a constant value of 100% so that we can easily see the variations in *Photoshop 7* results (all tests repeated three times and averaged). As it turns out, *Photoshop 7* in OS X is faster than version 6 in only a few operations, and sadly, slower than version 6 in OS 9 (we didn't bother testing it

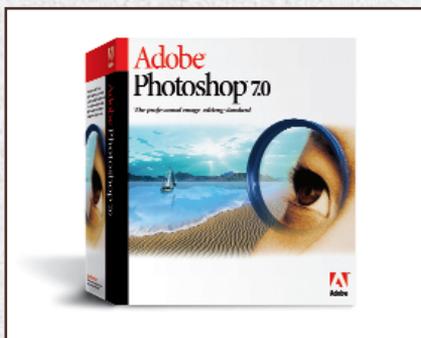


TIMES ARE RELATIVE — SHORTER IS FASTER

SAVE AS PDF's new security settings add options to set passwords, apply 128-bit encryption, and choose the levels of changes allowable.



in OS X Classic). Perhaps bringing the software up to speed was why Adobe took so long to deliver this carbonized version.



ADOBE PHOTOSHOP 7.0

System Requirements

MACINTOSH

- PowerPC processor (G3, G4, or G4 dual)
- Mac OS software version 9.1, 9.2, or OS X version 10.1.3
- 128 MB of RAM (192 MB recommended)
- 320 MB of available hard-disk space

WINDOWS

- Intel Pentium class III or 4 processor
- Windows 98, Windows 98 Second Edition, Windows Me, Windows NT with Service Pack 6a, Windows 2000 with Service Pack 2, or Windows XP
- 128 MB of RAM (192 MB recommended)
- 280 MB of available hard-disk space

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The most distressing discovery I made was the fact that *Photoshop 7* in OS X was unable to recognize most third party plug-ins. Even *KPT Effects*—which is supposed to be OS X-ready—didn't work.

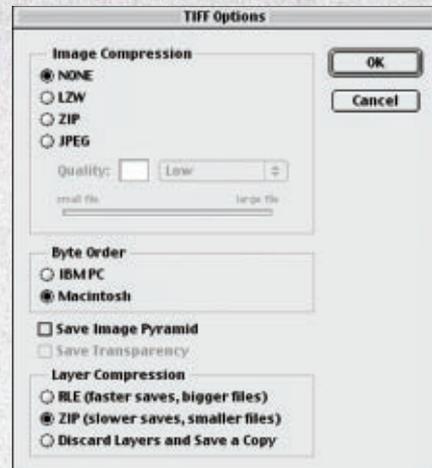
At first I suspected that it was because the beta version hadn't switched on something for third party developers—until Alien Skin Software sent me *Splat!* and a beta version of *Eye Candy 4000*. These seemed to work beautifully, thank heaven, because I don't know what I'd do without *Eye Candy's* Bevel Boss.

Mind you, some of the filters which version 7 now includes may well replace your third party plug-ins—Liquify, for instance, will get more use than Human Software's *Squizz*, and File Browser could easily replace *Extensis Portfolio*.

One important plug-in that concerns me is Kodak's Photo CD software. Without it, I'll no longer be able to use ColorSync's Film Profiles, nor open a Photo CD in LAB color space. *Photoshop 7* will open Photo CDs, of course, but without the benefit of a preview.

Betas will be betas—and of course I discovered a couple of really annoying glitches that I trust will be cleared up in the final shipping version (due any time soon). A layer could not be nudged using the arrow keys unless I first clicked and dragged it. And for some reason or other, image boxes refused to resize when I zoomed in or out.

This brings me to a curious item I found under the Export menu—Zoom-



SAVE AS TIFF (as well as Save as PDF) now includes the option to not only retain layers but also set layer compression.

View, an output format that works with the free “pixels on demand” browser plug-in from Viewpoint (www.viewpoint.com). This technology lets users download monitor resolution views of large image files, and zoom and pan in full resolution. The Mac version of *Viewpoint Media Player* is still in beta, but the possibilities for web galleries are intriguing.

On the other hand, if you don't want to wait (and/or pay Viewpoint's licensing fees), check out *Zoomify* at www.zoomify.com. *Zoomify* works with a wide range of browser plug-ins (Java, ActiveX, QuickTime, JavaScript, etc). [This issue's cover has been “zoomified” for your viewing pleasure at www.gxo.com.]

In spite of any minor inconveniences caused by lack of plug-ins, I already find myself using the new *Photoshop* more than version 6. You won't upgrade to get a dramatic boost in speed—because that's one thing *Photoshop 7* doesn't deliver—but you *will* unquestionably want to upgrade. Because, just as Stieglitz discovered so many years ago, you will find that you can do things which have never been done before. 🌍

Ron Giddings is a Toronto digital artist and photographer. Visit www.rgiddings.com to view samples of his work or contact him by e-mail at giddings@rgiddings.com.