

TECH REVIEW Adobe Photoshop CS5



5 stars out of 5

Price

Photoshop CS5
New \$699
Upgrade \$199

Photoshop CS5 Extended

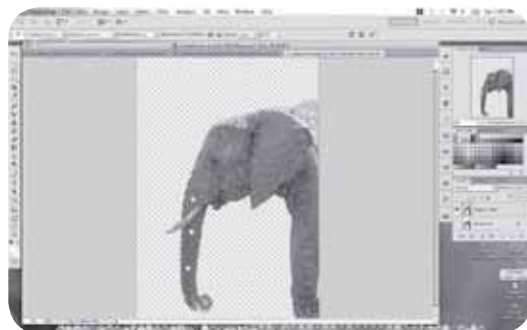
New \$999
Upgrade \$349

Web site

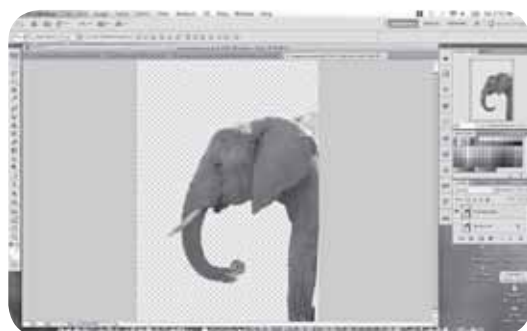
www.adobe.com



A single image is automatically processed to include HDR photographic features using Adobe Photoshop CS5. JOSHUA PHILIPP/THE EPOCH TIMES



A picture of an elephant with the Puppet Warp feature applied to it in Adobe Photoshop CS5. JOSHUA PHILIPP/THE EPOCH TIMES



The trunk of the elephant is moved in the photo using the Puppet Warp feature in Adobe Photoshop CS5. JOSHUA PHILIPP/THE EPOCH TIMES

A hands-on look at Adobe Photoshop Creative Suite 5

By JOSHUA PHILIPP
Epoch Times Staff

Adobe Photoshop CS5 presents another leap forward for the creative community—for photography, design, or as a hobby.

Adobe announced the release along with the rest of its Creative Suite 5. This latest edition of Photoshop has several new groundbreaking features, higher accessibility for casual users, and workflow enhancements that improve the overall product.

The Adobe Creative Suite has long been the industry standard for creative applications, while the latest release of Photoshop has kept strong to its status as the leading application for photo manipulation with its latest release.

I had the pleasure of testing a prerelease version of the software for this review and have been impressed overall by its new features. The review was done using a MacBook Pro running Snow Leopard, but the application is also available for Windows.

The major additions to Photoshop CS5 include a few different categories for designers, photographers, and artists. In particular, there has been a lot of work on image selection tools, HDR tools for photographers, and new painting features. There has also been some fine-tuning and the addition of several workflow enhancements, which were integrated by Adobe based on user feedback on Photoshop CS4.

NEW POSSIBILITIES

Among the major additions in Photoshop CS5 is Content-Aware fill. The most common tools that work in a similar way to Content-Aware fill are dust removal tools that can remove small splotches from images by reading data from their surroundings and replacing the spot with the closest match from somewhere else in the image.

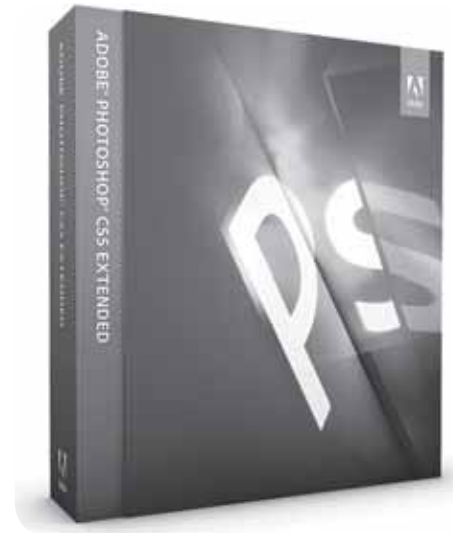
Content-Aware fill represents a major step forward for such technology. There are some striking examples of what can be done with this tool—from repairing the broken pieces in a photo of the Greek Parthenon, to filling in parts cut out from an image. When replacing pieces, it also matches the lighting, tone, and noise of the surrounding area. After using the feature I can attest that it lives up to the hype.

Photoshop CS5 still includes other methods of removing spots or editing out subjects from images, and Content-Aware fill is just one of the tools that can be selected for this. To test it out, I loaded an image of a power line stretching across an image. Using the Healing Brush with Content-Aware fill activated, I traced along the wire and it quickly disappeared from the image. There was a slight difference in some parts where the wire previously was, but this was still the most accurately I've seen such a tool work.

I did a second test using the Lasso tool. I loaded an image of a man standing against a wall and traced around him using the tool, selected the Content-Aware option, and instantly he disappeared from the image. There was no trace left this time. Looking at the image you'd never guess it was any different.

HDR PHOTOGRAPHY

Expect to see a flood of HDR images on



COURTESY OF ADOBE

the Web in the coming months. Adobe has made the photographic effect accessible to just about all users in Photoshop CS5. The photo effect can merge different exposures of pictures into a single picture.

There are several different features included for this, collected in a specialized HDR editing window.

So how is this useful? Let's say a photographer wants to take a landscape shot in the daylight. The photographer will often have the choice to adjust the camera's light for the sky, foreground, or to a specific subject. Using HDR, a photographer can take a picture for all three elements and then combine the desired parts into a single image so that all elements are properly lit and in focus.

Using the feature is as simple as clicking "Merge to HDR Pro."

The "Remove Ghost" setting is one of the key features that make the HDR tool in Photoshop CS5 so accessible. Since there will inevitably be slight differences between images, even when using a tripod—maybe the wind blows leaves or something moves—there are what are called "ghosts" in the images, which look like slight blurs. Photoshop CS5 can automatically remove these imperfections.

For those without a camera tripod or who would rather not take multiple pictures for HDR, Adobe includes a feature in Photoshop CS5 that allows users to create an HDR effect from a single image. Simply select HDR Toning from the Adjustments menu and it will automatically apply the effect, which can then be adjusted by the user. The final effect looks pretty good also.

There have also been some enhancements to the Adobe Camera RAW 6 plugin, which allows users to edit high-quality RAW images.

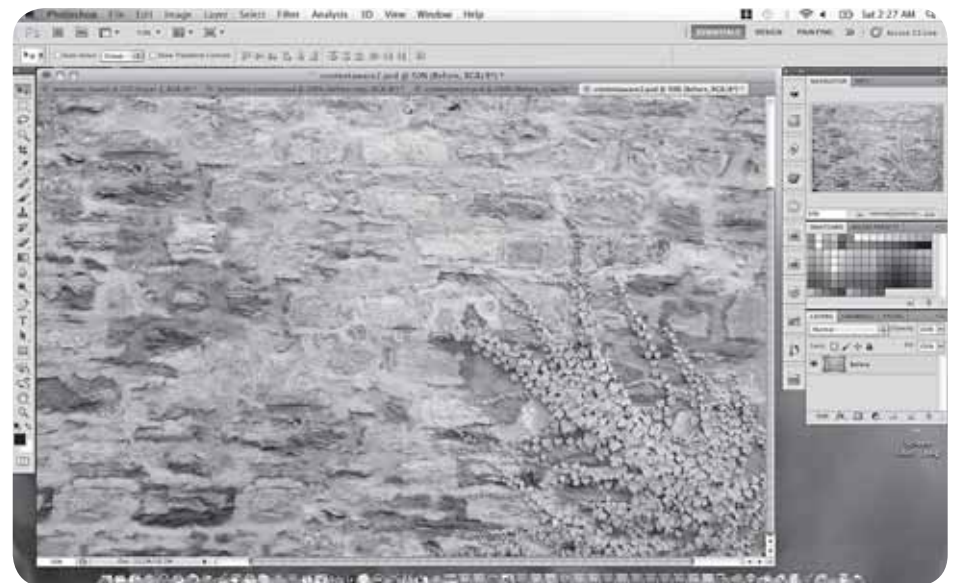
The noise reduction is great. It seems that Photoshop CS5 uses the same noise reduction features found in Lightroom 3 Beta 2, which can quickly clean up grainy looking images. Currently, the industry standard for noise reduction technology is Noise Ninja. Photoshop CS5 can produce similar results but with less distortion to the actual image. If used too heavily, Noise Ninja makes images look almost painted.

ARTISTIC TOUCH

It may not become the most used feature in Photoshop CS5, but Puppet Warp is definitely the coolest of the new additions. It



A subject is shown in an image prior to being removed using Content-Aware fill in Adobe Photoshop CS5. JOSHUA PHILIPP/THE EPOCH TIMES



A subject is removed from an image without a trace after applying the Content-Aware features in Adobe Photoshop CS5. JOSHUA PHILIPP/THE EPOCH TIMES

allows users to move elements in static images as if they were puppets. It could be used to bend an arm, create a smile, or alter a landscape.

The user first makes dots to create different bendable joints on the image. The image can then be moved and Photoshop CS5 will then calculate how the image needs to change to compensate for the various positions.

There are also new painting tools in Photoshop CS5. The new Mixer Brush tool mimics the ways that paints interact with different colored paints, by using the colors in the image. If a user paints yellow on blue, green "paint" will begin to appear, for example. There are different brushes and bristles that can be used and it works well with wacom tablet users to detect the angle and rotation of the brush as they draw.

Application of this tool can turn photographs into painting-like images. The tool is also designed to create original artworks.

Near-identical features have been available for quite some time now in Corel Painter 11, which is a stand-alone digital painting application. Painter 11 takes the feature a few steps further, however, and includes a digital palette where users can mix and use different colors.

IN A NUTSHELL

Photoshop CS5 includes a long list of new features and enhancements since CS4. Workflow enhancements include better integration with Adobe Bridge, one-click image straightening, and several others that are too many to name here. Essentially, in addition to the new tools, CS5 is a finer-tuned version of CS4 that most current users will appreciate.

For those wondering if Photoshop CS5 is a good investment, keep in mind that the application is still the industry standard and remains unrivaled in its arena. However, it is also really expensive. Casual users may want to consider Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 or Corel PaintShop Pro X3, which have reduced toolsets but have much lower price tags. For those on a budget, there are a few free alternatives including Photoshop Express, Gimp, and Picnik—just keep in mind that they are far from what Photoshop CS5 has to offer.

For professionals or those who can afford it, Photoshop is a great application and does not disappoint in its CS5 release. For those wondering if the update is worthwhile—from CS3 and earlier, definitely, and from CS4 most likely. The updates to the selection tools alone will save users a lot of time, and the additions of Content-Aware fill and Puppet Warp open new doors to creative possibilities.

App of the Week: Star Walk

By TAN TRUONG
Epoch Times Staff



4 stars out of 5

Star Walk, a planetarium app for the iPhone and iPad, brings the stars and planets into your hands. There are about two dozen other planetarium apps in Apple's App Store but this one stands out with its responsive interface, user friendliness, and artistic display.

Start up Star Walk and it asks your permission to obtain your location like any other location-based app, and then gives you a handful of quick, celestial facts on your coordinates such as phase of the moon, sunrise, and sunset.

Next, users are given a representation of the sky based on their location and time at that moment. The controls are as intuitive as you would expect. You move around the sky with your finger and you can even see below the horizon. Zooming in and out is done with a two-finger pinch.

There are some very nice touches such as lens flares when the Sun moves into view, and constellations appear with their graphical representations of their names superimposed over them. It also includes small but welcome details such as occasional shooting stars and the twinkling of distant stars. A cos-

mic but unobtrusive soundtrack also plays in the background. Collectively, these elements provide a very engaging presentation.

Users who are just beginning to learn astronomy will appreciate that Star Walk tracks their orientation and displays the sky in any direction the instant the iPhone is moved into a vertical orientation. Although Star Walk may sound like a toy, it actually has very useful features like setting a time in the past or present to view the sky. You can also accelerate time in increments of minutes, hours, days, or years with a flick of the finger so you can watch how the celestial bodies move through the sky.

You can also simulate varying levels of light pollution to show more or fewer stars. With just a tap you can get details and statistics on any of the 9,000 celestial bodies in the app. Star Walk is light on technical features and details and will probably not be an astronomer's app of choice, but for the rest of us it provides an informative walk through the stars.

Sony Discontinues Floppy Disk

An ode to the once-ubiquitous storage device

By JACK PHILLIPS
Epoch Times Staff

Floppy disks, the once-ubiquitous 3.5-inch storage devices, are one step closer to going the way of Betamax and cassette tapes.

Floppy disks will be discontinued, said Sony, marking the end of nearly 30 years of selling the storage devices. Sony is the largest manufacturer of the disks.

The decision to stop selling the disks next March is yet one more

nail in the coffin for the storage devices that were once used by nearly every computer user to transfer data.

Over the past decade or so, the disks have been phased out in favor of USB devices, external hard drives, CDs, DVDs, and various other storage mediums. Along with the emergence of other mediums, computers and laptops have increasingly stopped providing a port into which users can insert floppy disks.

Sony made the decision after

sales of floppy disks plummeted over the past decade. They have remained relatively popular in Japan, but even that popularity is declining. In 2002, Sony reportedly sold 47 million disks in Japan, while in 2009, they only sold 12 million, according to a Daily Mail article.

Other companies like Maxell and Verbatim still make the disks, so they aren't completely extinct—yet.

Floppy disks were first used by IBM in 1971 and were eight inches

wide with a paltry 80 kilobyte storage space. Since then, the disks have gotten smaller and smaller, while increasing storage capacity. As far as storage mediums go, however, the current floppy disks still have a relatively low amount of space—the maximum storage space for a 3.5-inch disk is approximately 2 megabytes.

Since many can still remember using these storage devices to transfer data or install programs, floppy discs may one day inspire nostalgic feelings. Perhaps, like vinyl records, they might even experience a comeback.

Courier Tablet Sidelined, Says Microsoft

By JACK PHILLIPS
Epoch Times Staff

Courier, a tablet project that was being developed by Microsoft to potentially compete with Apple's iPad was sidelined, according to an official Microsoft blog post.

Though it was never officially

announced that the Courier tablet was being developed, speculators thought the device could give the iPad a run for its money, and lower the iPad's cost due to competition.

Microsoft Corporate Vice President of Communications Frank Shaw posted the bombshell on a blog after there had been a "ton of

speculation" about the device.

"At any given time, we're looking at new ideas, investigating, testing, incubating them. It's in our DNA to develop new form factors and natural user interfaces to foster productivity and creativity," said Shaw.

The prototype had two seven-inch folding screens, WiFi, a camera, and

had both a touch and pen interface, according to Gizmodo.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the Courier tablet was being developed by Alchemy Ventures, a new technologies lab at Microsoft. Microsoft told the lab to halt development.

"[Courier] will be evaluated for use in future offerings, but we have no plans to build such a device at this time," said Shaw in the statement.

Last week, the new 3G version of the iPad was released in the U.S.