

Adobe Photoshop™

for Macintosh®



Alan Lithograph, Inc.



Walter Schild, director of research and development,
Alan Lithograph, Inc.

Adobe Photoshop software is the cornerstone of the prepress department at Alan Lithograph, Inc., a major Los Angeles based printing and color separation company with annual sales of more than \$25 million. Almost three years ago, the company became the first large commercial printer to move from proprietary, color electronic prepress systems (CEPS) to open, desktop-computer-based systems and digital image-processing software based on the Adobe PostScript™ language.

Walter Schild, director of research and development at Alan Lithograph, says the decision to change was easy. "As our business grew, we were facing increasing customer demands—for more color manipulation, more complex retouching and faster turnarounds. We found that high-end Macintosh computers with

Adobe Photoshop software could give us as good or better performance than proprietary workstations that cost as much as eight times more per seat.

"Adobe Photoshop really clinched it for us," says Schild. "We found no other off-the-shelf software with the power, range of features and output quality to compete with high-end CEPS offerings."

High Quality Is Non-Negotiable

Highest quality output is essential. Alan Lithograph's customer list includes automobile manufacturers Honda and Toyota, leading advertising and design agencies, and entertainment industry clients. The firm uses Adobe Photoshop to create color brochures, movie posters, catalogs, annual reports, direct marketing campaigns, sales collateral and other materials.





Original stage illustration retouched and prepared for compositing of individual photographs using Adobe Photoshop. The final image is shown on the front page.

“Compositing services are constantly in demand,” says Schild. “The client will come to us with a handful of different transparencies to be composited for inclusion in a product brochure or movie poster. Because the transparencies typically vary in color balance and density, color correction is always part of the process.”

Another benefit of Adobe Photoshop for Macintosh is giving customers more control over—and access to—their artwork. Because more than 95 percent of its customers use Macintosh computers, Alan Lithograph lets customers retain their computer files once a job is printed, which enables them to incorporate elements of previous jobs into future ones.

“Since the changeover, we’ve improved our profit margins,” says Schild, “while at the same time achieving 20 to 30 percent cost savings for customers. We’re competing for business on price as well as quality, and keeping costs down keeps customers coming back.”

The Need for Speed

Alan Lithograph frequently works with image files that are over 100 megabytes in size, so the company is always looking for ways to increase the speed of prepress processing. “We were a very early adopter of Power Macintosh™ computers,” says Schild. “With the Adobe Photoshop 2.5.1

native processing plug-in, we found that we completed jobs two to three times faster than before. The faster machines make for a much more fluid creative process and quickly pay for themselves.”

Adding to Adobe Photoshop Functionality

Schild is excited about the features and enhancements in Adobe Photoshop 3.0. “Having the entire application, including the user interface, running in native mode on the Power Macintosh represents another significant boost in processing speed and prepress productivity,” he says.

“Because Adobe Photoshop is our key prepress tool, the ability to work with transparent layers and composite on the fly is a tremendous time-saving benefit. The Layers feature is particularly valuable because each layer carries its own Layer Mask; you can thus apply an effect such as a gradient without losing any of the original data on the layer. The effect looks as if you’ve applied it to the layer, and if you want to change the layer again, all the original data is still intact.”

Says Schild, “Until version 3.0, we would composite a proof, and if the customer wanted to change a shadow or move an element, we had to go back to each component of the image, make changes and then recomposite the image. The Layers feature with Layer Masks makes it easier to work interactively

with a customer and experiment with different looks.”

Another reason layering is critical to Alan Lithograph is that almost all of its work is done in CMYK mode. “We’ve used a Layers feature in Fractal Design Painter®, for instance, but that program is a creation tool. It’s not a professional production application, and it doesn’t allow for CMYK color correction,” says Schild. “Adobe Photoshop gives us the creative flexibility we need while working in CMYK.”

“With Adobe Photoshop 3.0, we have easy ways to do selective color correction, color in color and density masking. We can now offer, in-house, the kind of photo-realistic color editing that previously required CEPS equipment.

“Adobe Photoshop 3.0 has many important features, and a number of functions that were available only through plug-ins are now integrated into the program,” Schild says. “That means we can depend on getting more consistent and reliable results, as well as improved performance in many areas. The best keeps getting better.”

Alan Lithograph, Inc. Systems at-a-Glance

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