● PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop CS2
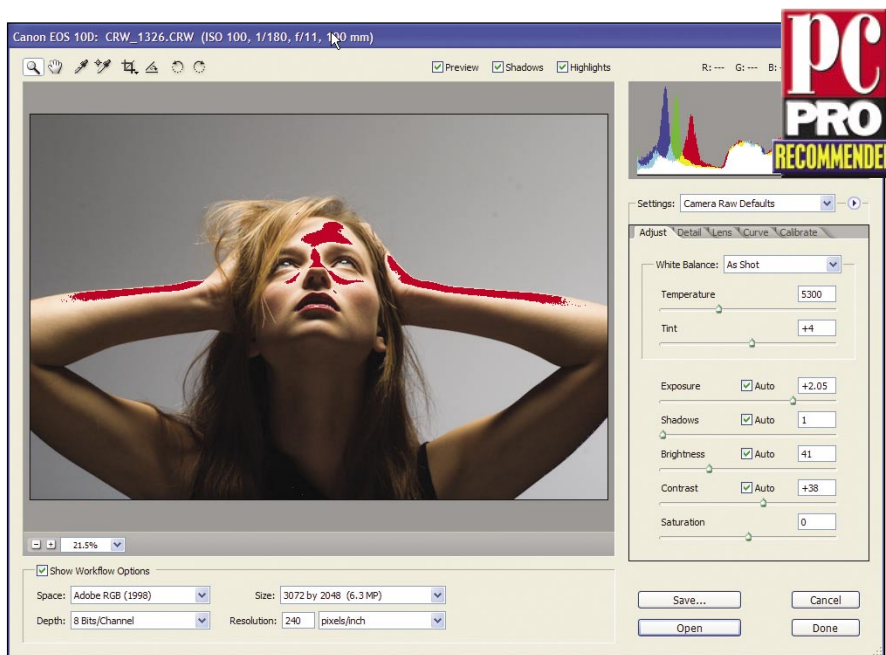
PRICE £439 (£516 inc VAT)   **UPGRADE** £119 (£140 inc VAT)
SUPPLIER Adobe Store via website   **INTERNET** www.adobe.co.uk
VERDICT Enhanced graphics file management, new high-end digital photography support, multilayer handling and non-destructive transformations ensure all Photoshop users will benefit.

PC PRO RECOMMENDED

Photoshop CS2 offers a number of new features aimed at high-end digital camera users.

Photoshop dominates the world of professional photo editing so completely that a new release is awaited with genuine excitement and its launch is a Red Letter day. Rip off the wrapping and install this latest version, however, and your first feeling is likely to be disappointment, as there's little immediately obvious in terms of new tools, palettes or commands. In fact, the most visible change is the loss of the former File Browser palette.

In practice, this is a major step forward. Visual file management has been devolved to the Adobe Bridge application, which offers a number of core image-handling advantages (*see Adobe Bridge, opposite*). In the process, Adobe grafts on numerous Photoshop-based automation features, such as the ability to apply image mode and type conversions. Particularly impressive is the ability to select multiple images taken with bracketed exposures to produce a single HDR (high dynamic range) image with 32 bits per channel, although the editing options then available are limited.

The most welcome Bridge-based feature for Photoshop CS2 users is the ability to load unprocessed camera images into the Camera Raw module. Here, the new automatic image analysis, curve adjustments, and shadow and highlight clipping previews help you get the best possible results from your digital negatives. And you're now able to save export settings or simply copy and paste settings from one Raw file to another. Best of all, you can load multiple files simultaneously and, while they're being processed, multithreading means you're able to carry on working within Photoshop, Bridge or even Camera Raw itself.

Photoshop CS2 also addresses the most obvious of its limitations when dealing with digital photos. Hidden away among the 100-plus options under the Filter menu is a new Reduce Noise filter that can target unwanted grain in individual colour channels as well as correcting JPEG compression artefacts. There's also a Smart Sharpen command that is able to correct types of blur – gaussian, lens and motion – and independently sharpen shadows and highlights. Most impressive is the Distort | Lens Correction filter that lets you interactively or precisely adjust for pincushion or barrel distortions and for the angle of your shot, and then throws in control over chromatic aberration and vignetting for good measure.

There are also two new tools, or rather variations on existing tools, that soon prove invaluable when enhancing your photos.

Adobe ImageReady CS2

Since 1999 and the launch of Photoshop 5.5, each new release of Adobe Photoshop has brought a new version of Adobe ImageReady, its web-focused partner. And every time we've wondered why – after all, both programs use the same core underlying bitmap engine and layer-based approach. More than that, we've wondered how, with so much in common, the two programs could somehow be so different. While Photoshop is the undisputed market leader when it comes to photo editing, compared to its primarily vector-based rivals such as Macromedia Fireworks and Xara X[1] (*see issue 118, p80*) ImageReady is frankly an awkward embarrassment when it comes to web imaging.

Thankfully, the pain is nearly over. Yes, there's a copy of ImageReady CS2 in the box, but Adobe has announced that its days are numbered. Instead, ImageReady's web features are being integrated back into Photoshop CS2 itself, starting in this release with the Animation palette and the support for variable handling. More importantly, with its new vector-style multiple layer handling and Smart Object-based symbol handling, Photoshop CS2 provides a much better platform for future web graphics production.

Compared to the existing Colour Replacement tool, the dedicated new Red Eye tool lets you remove this common problem with a single click while offering advanced control over pupil size and darkening amount if you need it. The new Spot Healing Brush intelligently analyses the area around the tool to automatically sample the best pixels for healing the area under the brush. It isn't fail-proof, but in most cases you can remove flaws or unwanted objects with a single click.

When the Healing Brush was first introduced it caused jaws to drop, and Photoshop CS2's new Vanishing Point capability will do the same. This is a comprehensive filter dialog in which you first set up perspective planes to match those in your image using the Perspective Grid tool. You can then use the dialog's Marquee, Stamp and Brush tools to copy, clone and paint, with each tool automatically adjusting to the image's underlying perspective. Copy a window on one side of a building, for example, and you can then move it to the other side with its size and perspective automatically updating in real-time as you drag. This is especially good for applying text to product packaging mock-ups. Adobe has even found a way of storing the perspective information for future reuse within JPEG files.

The Vanishing Point filter is eye-catching, but Photoshop CS2's most welcome new feature is the least immediately obvious: using the Layer palette or the Move tool, you can now Shift- and

Ctrl-click to select multiple layers. It might not sound revolutionary, but the ability to move multiple objects at once without having to link them first makes a big practical difference, and aligning and distributing is now child's play. You can even update the font in multiple text layers simultaneously. In many ways, multiple layer selections mean that arranging a composition in Photoshop CS2 is more like arranging one in a vector application such as Illustrator – a feeling reinforced by the new support for Smart Guides, which dynamically appear to indicate alignment with other layer-based objects.

Another subtle but important change is that, when you select a layer or layers with the Move tool, the Free Transform controls automatically appear to enable instant resizing, skewing and rotation. And the Free Transform tool now offers a completely new option: Warp Mode. Select this

Multiple layer selection and non-destructive Smart Objects boost compositional power.

and you can choose from 15 preset envelope-based distortions, from Arc through to Twist, and specify a precise level of bend and horizontal and vertical distortion. Alternatively, you can drag on the onscreen Warp Grid to create your own custom distortion, stretching and squashing the object as if it's on a rubber sheet. When happy with your transformation, whether free, warp or a combination, you hit Return or the Commit command icon to update the layer's pixels and make your changes permanent. Or at least this is what happened in the past. With Photoshop CS2, there's a new option. If you first turn your layer or layers into a Smart Object, the original pixel data is stored permanently in the file. This means you can now apply layer transformations non-destructively so that, for example, you may undo a warp distortion applied to a Smart Object. Most importantly, it means that if you scale down a layer and then later decide to scale it back up to its original size, its quality remains unaffected.

Of course, if you scale the Smart Object larger than its original size, its resolution will deteriorate, as that's the nature of bitmaps. That's not true of vectors, however, which is why Adobe has added a special option for Illustrator artwork to be pasted as a truly resolution-independent Smart Object. Also, if you duplicate a Smart Object layer, both remain linked to the same internal data so that if you edit the Smart Object (bitmaps open into a new Photoshop document, while

vectors open into Illustrator) both Smart Objects will update accordingly. This edit-once-update-many behaviour is particularly handy for web designers working with repeated elements such as buttons and goes a long way to make up for the lack of new functionality in ImageReady CS2.

That's it for new hands-on editing power, but Photoshop CS2 offers efficiency improvements too. Scripting has been enhanced with a new central Image Processor dialog to manage batch processing, a new range of video-based actions and new support for event-based scripting. And Photoshop CS2 adds the ability to save and reload customised keyboard shortcuts and menus alongside palette positions as named workspaces. Lastly, there's a range of miscellaneous yet important improvements: the new font sample preview, extended 16-bit handling, consistent PDF generation based on presets that now offer automatic 16-bit to 8-bit conversion, video graphics preview on a connected TV, and support for up to 3.5GB of RAM on 64-bit systems.

So the first impressions are deceptive. Underneath the hood, Photoshop CS2 offers comprehensive benefits in terms of productivity and creativity throughout the program and throughout the professional imaging workflow.

TOM ARAH

PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
OVERALL	★★★★☆

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III; 256MB RAM; 280MB hard disk space; Windows 2000 (SP 3) onwards.
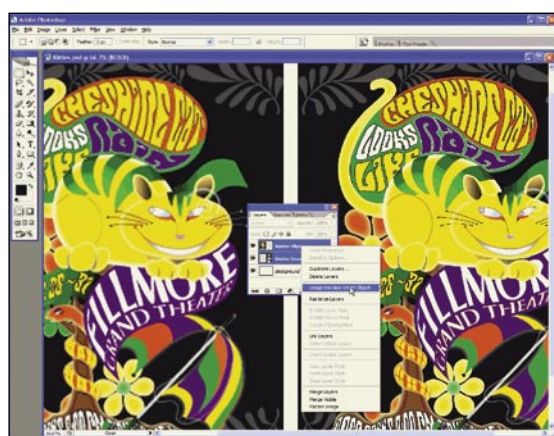
Adobe Bridge

Perhaps the single biggest change for each of the main CS2 applications, and for the Creative Suite as a whole, is the bundling of the Adobe Bridge application for visually browsing and managing graphical files.

Bridge might be new, but it's instantly recognisable to Photoshop users. Essentially, it's Photoshop's File Browser promoted to an application in its own right. As such, the basic layout of folder tree, image preview and meta data panels down the left of the screen and image thumbnails to the right will be familiar.

In other ways, the program is different. To begin with, it offers support for all Adobe's native AI, PSD, INDD and PDF files, as well as most graphic formats and Microsoft Office files, with all thumbnails resizable in real-time. To help keep on top of your digital assets, Bridge offers advanced EXIF, IPTC and XMP meta data handling, along with a basic rating and labelling system. And once you've selected your files, the program offers more power, including file housekeeping commands, the ability to rotate JPEGs

The new Adobe Bridge application offers suite-wide visual-image management.

losslessly and a basic slide show facility. Best of all, Bridge offers various dedicated workspaces such as Metadata and FilmStrip (in which you can view all pages in a PDF), and a handy Compact Mode in which the program acts as a floating palette, making it simple to drag and drop files into the various CS apps.

When working as a front end to CS, Adobe Bridge offers further dedicated features via the Bridge Center. This acts as a dashboard, offering direct links to recently accessed files and folders, enabling all open files to be saved as a group for future reloading. The Bridge

Center also provides a RSS news feed, highlighting available extensions and tips, and access to new suite-wide colour-management control. Suite users can also use Bridge as a visual front end for Version Cue, Adobe's existing file-version manager, thanks to the ability to view project files, versions and alternates as thumbnails.

And all users can benefit from Adobe Bridge's new Stock Photos feature. This offers centralised access to a number of providers' royalty-free image libraries, with searches returning thumbnails like a local directory. It's then simple to download a free low-resolution image for comping and, when everything's finalised, to pay for and download the high-resolution version. It's efficient and a great boost to creativity, but be warned: free images are only to be used for comping and the high-resolution images tend to be exorbitantly priced.

Overall, Adobe Bridge isn't perfect (it's no match for Photoshop Elements 3's Organiser window for managing photo collections), but it's a welcome addition to each of the CS2 applications and a great front end for the Creative Suite as a whole.

● VECTOR DRAWING

Adobe Illustrator CS2

PRICE £435 (£511 inc VAT) **UPGRADE** £139 (£163 inc VAT)
SUPPLIER Adobe Store via website **INTERNET** www.adobe.co.uk
VERDICT Illustrator rethinks its interface, its tracing capabilities and the whole basis of vector-based illustration. End result: this program is in a creative league of its own.

Illustrator, Adobe's vector-drawing application, was first launched in 1987 and its antiquated interface has been crying out for an overhaul for years. Illustrator CS2 finally obliges with support for saving palette arrangements (although not menus or shortcuts) as named workspaces. More significant is the introduction of a context-sensitive Control palette.

It's difficult to overstate what a difference this makes. Previously, just the basic setting up of an object involved multiple trips to a whole host of palettes – Colour, Swatches, Stroke, Transparency and so on. Now, you can simply work your way along the Control palette setting fill and stroke colour, outline width, brush style, opacity, graphic style, position and size. Even better, you can click on the names of many of the Control palette parameters and the relevant palette opens up immediately below offering finer control. Adobe says that the Control palette offers direct access to 80 per cent of Illustrator CS2's power, and that feels about right. It's even possible to work with all other palettes hidden.

In terms of new power, Adobe is making much of two innovations, the first of which is its Live Trace capability. Whereas Illustrator previously offered a basic AutoTrace tool for creating a single shape at a time, it has now fully integrated the powerful raster-to-vector conversion power of its standalone Streamline application. Place a bitmap, hit the new Live Trace command, and a few seconds later the entire bitmap image is replaced by an astonishingly high-quality vector equivalent.

Since the link to the original bitmap is maintained, the tracing is 'live', which means that if you resize or externally edit the source, or change settings, it will automatically update. Using the Control palette drop-down, you can select from 13 presets ranging from Comic Art through to High Fidelity Photo, Technical Drawing and Hand Drawn Sketch. Alternatively, you can call up the Tracing Options dialog to take control over advanced settings such as path fitting and minimum area, then preview the effect as you make changes. Powerful creative options include the ability to base the tracing on a swatch library that you select, or to add generated colours to the current selection.

Live Trace is an excellent way for illustrators to sketch naturally on paper and then convert

The Live Trace feature works well with colour photos and sketches.

the scan to high-quality vectors. But in previous versions, editing the resulting sketch was by no means simple – in particular, simply adding coloured fills to your work could be a nightmare. The problem is that humans think about drawings in a different way to computers. We might draw four intersecting lines, for example, and then expect to be able to colour the resulting square. To the computer, though, there is no square, just four separate lines. The only way to colour the apparent object was to laboriously recreate it from scratch.

Well, not any more, thanks to Illustrator CS2's new Live Paint capability. This treats all lines and objects as if they're on a single layer, so that overlapping objects create new regions and intersecting lines create new edges. Turn a selection of lines and shapes into a Live Paint Group and you can then use the Live Paint Bucket tool to interactively fill apparent regions, or the Live Paint Selection tool to select any combination of apparent regions or edges ready for formatting. Adobe has even thought of those occasions where lines don't quite intersect but still look like shapes to the human eye, and offers the ability to automatically close gaps in the Live Paint Group.

The system isn't perfect – brushes, transparency and live effects are lost in the conversion – but you can usually work around this, especially as you're able to copy and paste any Live Paint selection as a new object. And we've saved the best until last: the effect really is live, so that if you move or redraw a defining line, the Live Paint fills and edges update automatically. This is exciting stuff, most

obviously for illustrators, but also for graphic design work for producing logos or even just the odd shape.

After such an amazing breakthrough, the remaining introductions to Illustrator CS2's creative arsenal inevitably seem mundane, but in other releases they'd qualify as highlights. To begin with, you can now specify whether strokes are placed along the inside, centre or outside of a path. You can also now apply Photoshop's range of creative filters to your vector or bitmap objects much more easily, thanks to the introduction of Photoshop's thumbnail-based Filter Gallery. Plus, you can quickly apply spot colour swatches to colourise greyscale images and drop shadows.

Crucially, these spot colours will preview and print accurately as separate plates either directly from Illustrator or from InDesign CS2 or Acrobat 7 Professional. Other examples of enhanced integration are the ability to export Photoshop PSD files while keeping grouped textboxes editable, and to output PDFs in which you can toggle the visibility of layers in Acrobat 7. And, as with InDesign, when you place a Photoshop PSD file you can now choose any embedded layer comp to quickly explore creative options.

To output your work for use on the Web, Illustrator CS2 now offers enhanced Flash export, including the ability to embed text as curves, to better control the mapping of layers to frames and to lock and compress the resulting SWF movie. And Illustrator now supports the latest SVG 1.1 standard plus the emerging SVG Tiny and SVG Basic formats for display on mobile handsets. Print still remains paramount, though, and here the new suite-wide PDF and especially pre-press PDF/X presets are enormously important. Illustrator CS2 also offers the new ability to output tiled artboards to multipage PDFs.

Adobe is pitching this last feature as if it somehow addresses Illustrator's one overriding limitation: its self-imposed restriction to working on a single page at a time. It doesn't, however, and for general graphic design this gives multipage rivals CorelDRAW and FreeHand MX a huge headstart. And that's a shame, as for producing one-off, vector-based illustrations Illustrator CS2 is in a creative league of its own and leaves the competition standing.

TOM ARAH

PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
OVERALL	★★★★☆

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III; 256MB RAM; 820MB hard disk space; Windows 2000 (SP 3) onwards.

● PUBLISHING

Adobe InDesign CS2

PRICE £609 (£716 inc VAT)　　　**UPGRADE** £139 (£163 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER Adobe Store via website　　　**INTERNET** www.adobe.co.uk

VERDICT Improved text handling, graphic integration, layout options and the introduction of Object Styles and reusable Snippets all help to boost InDesign's productivity.

InDesign was first launched in 1999, making it the most recent of the main Creative Suite applications. But in many ways, it's also the most central. By incorporating Illustrator's vectors and Photoshop's bitmaps into its multipage layouts, and by offering advanced print via Acrobat and web repurposing via GoLive, InDesign acts as the natural hub for the suite as a whole.

InDesign's integration with the graphical suite applications is especially important and is helped by the bundling of Adobe Bridge (*see p81*). The handling of Photoshop PSD files has long been excellent, but is taken to a new level by the ability to switch layer visibility on and off and to select from embedded layer comps to quickly explore layout possibilities. In many ways, the integration with Illustrator is even tighter with the ability to cut and paste paths and then edit them within InDesign – these paths can now be opened, closed and reversed – while for embedded AI files you're now able to control the visibility of layers. For files provided in Acrobat format, the ability to load and place multipage PDFs helps to boost production efficiency.

Graphics are crucial to the end impact of most InDesign projects, but successful text handling is essential to them all, starting right from the initial text import. Improved XML handling, with options for dealing with tables, stripping unmatched content and automatic updating will all be welcome in advanced production environments. The new Word/RTF import filter's ability to map styles provides XML-inspired efficiency, consistency and control for all users, especially as import settings can be saved as presets. And the ability to preserve local overrides while stripping out other styling will save hours of re-italicising and emboldening.

Basic text control within InDesign has also been totally revamped. With new options for text drag-and-drop, dynamic spellchecking and AutoCorrect, InDesign's text handling is brought more into line with Microsoft Word, and that includes text styling too. You can now paste without formatting, selectively clear character and paragraph-level overrides, find and apply
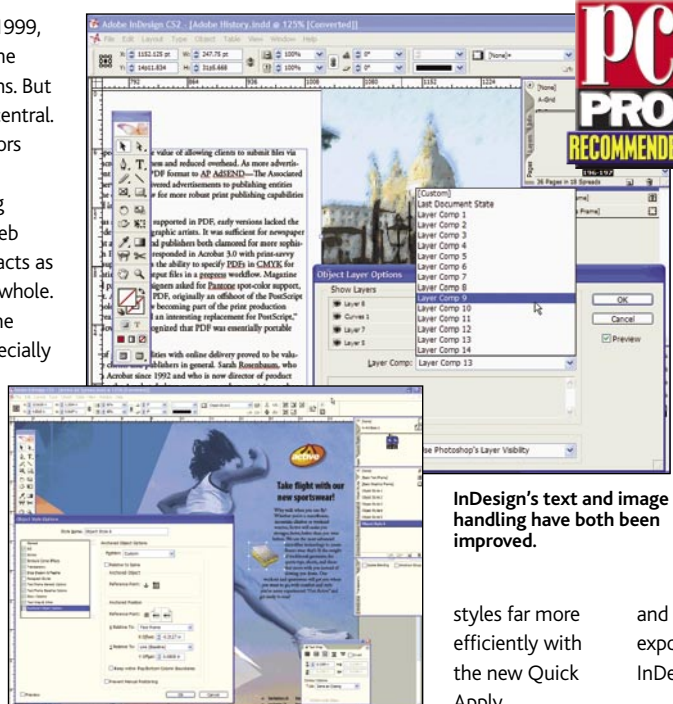
Object Styles and more flexible anchored frames boost formatting and layout options.

InDesign's text and image handling have both been improved.

styles far more efficiently with the new Quick Apply capability, selectively import and replace styles, and format blocks of text with multiple styles using the new Apply Next Style option. Best of all, InDesign CS2 at last offers a wysiwyg font sample, although it's pretty appalling that it has taken Adobe five major releases to get around to it.

New layout options include the ability to specify baseline grids at the text-frame level to ensure accurate layout on pages containing areas of text with different leading values. The control over anchored frames has also been enhanced, with the ability to position the frame anywhere inside or outside the current text frame, enabling callouts, pull quotes, margin notes and linked graphics that automatically travel with their associated text. And InDesign CS2 now provides dedicated handling for the most important type of anchored text: footnotes (although surprisingly not endnotes).

Further layout enhancements include the ability to automatically convert frames from one shape to another and to intelligently re-apply transformations such as scaling and resizing to grouped objects or individually. Another major omission finally addressed is the option for a placed graphic to proportionally fill its frame even when this has a different aspect ratio.

All told, InDesign's layout and graphical

power is extraordinary, but trying to keep on top of it and to ensure consistency can become a problem. That's where InDesign CS2's biggest innovation comes in: Object Styles. Using the new Object Styles palette, you can save any combination of object-level formatting as a named style and then apply all settings to another object with a single click. Parameters that can be saved include not just the obvious – fills, strokes, corner effects, transparency, drop shadowing and feathering, but text and anchored frame settings, and even a default paragraph style. Even better, you can apply a style, update the current object and then redefine the style to automatically update all styled objects in the current publication.

About the only thing that isn't included in the Object Style is the object itself, but InDesign CS2 caters for this too with its other killer feature: snippets. Now, you can save any element or selection of elements from your design for later reuse simply by dragging and dropping to and from Adobe Bridge. It's simple, but hides some amazing work behind the scenes, as each snippet is based on INX, the new InDesign Interchange format, an XML-based scripting technology that automatically recreates the objects, their formatting and their positioning. INX is also used to enable exported InDesign CS2 files to be opened in InDesign CS, providing backward compatibility.

In terms of output, InDesign CS2's Package for GoLive command has been enhanced to enable a range of pages or selected objects to be repurposed for the Web, but the primary focus is on commercial print. InDesign CS2 sees many improvements here, most notably the inclusion of the InBooklet SE add-in for managing basic page imposition, the ability to accurately preview rich blacks onscreen and the new default 'safe CMYK' policy that automatically converts RGB objects according to colour management settings while preserving the values in CMYK objects. Advances in Acrobat include the new PDF presets, especially the prepress PDF/X standards, and, for suite users, the option to have InDesign CS2 automatically open Acrobat 7 Professional to create a companion JDF (Job Definition Format) file to specify how the PDF should be processed.

Overall, InDesign CS2 sees major innovations from beginning to end of the publishing workflow. You can't ask for much more than that.

TOM ARAH

PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
OVERALL	★★★★☆

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III; 256MB RAM; 300MB hard disk space; Windows 2000 (SP 3) onwards.

● WEB AUTHORING

Adobe GoLive CS2

PRICE £335 (£394 inc VAT) **UPGRADE** £139 (£169 inc VAT)
SUPPLIER Adobe Store via website **INTERNET** www.adobe.co.uk
VERDICT GoLive embraces CSS for layout and enhances its mobile authoring credentials, but this is an underwhelming release.

The main focus of the Creative Suite applications is on commercial print, with the one exception of GoLive. This tries to take the same high-impact design-rich approach to the Web. As such, GoLive has long been interested in the design potential of CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), and with this release CSS moves centre stage.

For CSS-based type handling, there are a number of new features, including the option of converting HTML styles to CSS, the ability to specify a default CSS and greatly improved site-wide CSS management, right down to the ability to see how many times particular classes and identifiers are used. The biggest difference is the revamp of the CSS Editor, which now lets you view the Definitions and Source views simultaneously.

Surprisingly, the most fundamental CSS-based changes aren't concerned with typography but layout. CSS positioning has now been made the default for Layout Grid designs, with the former conversion to HTML tables now left as an option. The Objects palette has been redesigned to reflect the new approach with a new tab for dragging on CSS layout objects, such as the popular three-column layout with resizable central column. The palette also now provides a new top section to access tools for drawing textbox-style layers, for zooming in and panning layouts. There's even a dedicated Object Selection tool for selecting DIV tags, the core unit of CSS-based layouts.

The appeal of this approach to Adobe is obvious, as it makes GoLive look and feel more like the other Creative Suite applications, but there's a strong feeling of padding. Is a Zoom tool capable of 1,600 per cent magnification necessary for onscreen layouts that will always be displayed at 100 per cent? More importantly, Adobe seems to have got things the wrong way around. CSS-based layout was only added in the Level 2 specification, which isn't yet fully supported by all browsers. It would be better to concentrate, like Dreamweaver, on the Level 1 typographic capabilities of CSS and, for example, avoid the use of the deprecated and inefficient <font> tag for sizing and colouring.

Another point to bear in mind is that it's a relatively trivial programming task to implement CSS2-based layouts, so where's the other new power in GoLive CS2?

The biggest development is in authoring
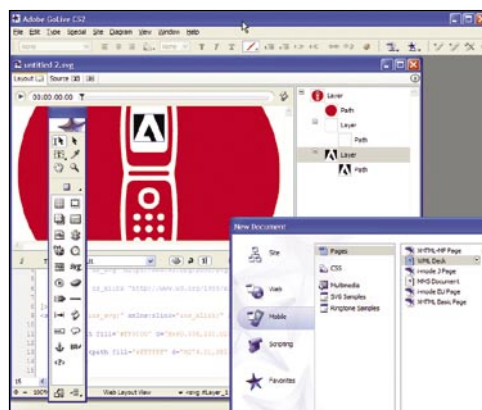
GoLive CS2's main improvements involve mobile authoring.

mobile content for viewing on handsets. Here, Adobe's commitment to open standards and interest in graphics comes to the fore. A wide range of mobile formats – XHTML, XHTML Mobile Profile, WML, i-mode and MMS – are each catered for with integrated layout and source view editing; the support for CSS @media querying enables dual targeting, and GoLive's Opera-driven Live Renderer now offers a dedicated small screen view. Most impressive is GoLive CS2's support for the web vector SVG Tiny (SVG-t) format, which is expected to be big in the near future. Here, the tie-in with Illustrator CS2 and a new dedicated SVG-t editor, which integrates code editing, layout preview and hierarchical object selection, stand out.

It's impressive power but, for the moment at least, mobile authoring is a minority interest compared to traditional web authoring. And here the other advances in GoLive CS2 – the ability to automatically convert an InDesign package to an XHTML website, support for secure file transfer through secure FTP and secure WebDAV via both SSL and SSH, and the ability to automate the creation of favicons for different browsers – look much thinner.

Overall, GoLive CS2 is a disappointing release. Dedicated web designers will be better served by the more streamlined Macromedia Dreamweaver.

TOM ARAH

PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★☆☆
OVERALL	★★★☆☆

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III; 256MB RAM; 400MB hard disk space; Windows 2000 (SP 3) onwards.

Acrobat 7 Professional

Acrobat 7 Professional stands out from the other Creative Suite applications because it has its own development schedule and was originally released at the turn of the year (*see issue 125, p80*).

Naturally, the program's focus is on the core Acrobat PDF format, so you might expect its role to be central. However, with each of the main CS apps outputting directly to PDF and now sharing common PDF preset management and the ability to produce both PDF 1.6-compatible and PDF/X-compliant files, Creative Suite users don't need dedicated Acrobat software for PDF authoring. So what else do CS Premium Edition users gain from the inclusion of Acrobat 7 Professional and this latest release in particular?

To begin with, it lets you create PDF files from any application that can print, with added functionality and one-click convenience for the most important, such as AutoCAD and the main Microsoft Office apps. This support now extends to Outlook for creating permanent email archives. Also new is the inclusion of Adobe Designer 7, a dedicated form-authoring package built on the dual standards of PDF and XML.

Acrobat 7 Professional also adds functionality for handling PDFs, such as options for combining files, adding headers and footers, organising pages, cropping, optimising and so on. Most importantly, it offers dedicated commenting and tracking capabilities, and in this release provides the ability to enable users of the free Adobe Reader 7 program to participate in the review process (as such, workgroups might well want to invest in at least one copy).

The ability to create and comment on exact digital reproductions is clearly of benefit to Creative Suite users, both when testing ideas and proofing. And PDF has more to offer the print designer with its ability to act as the digital master from which the colour-separated printing plates are generated. Here, Acrobat Professional's existing preflighting capabilities and its colour separations preview are invaluable. Acrobat 7 Professional can now also fix many of the problems that it identifies, such as hairline strokes and RGB colours that need to be converted to CMYK.

Direct changes to the PDF are a useful last resort, but for Creative Suite users it's generally better to preflight and make changes to the original. And, assuming your workgroup already has a review cycle based on earlier versions of Acrobat software, this is one upgrade that most users can live without.

Adobe Creative Suite 2

PRICE Premium Edition, £889 (£1,045 inc VAT); Standard Edition, £669 (£786 inc VAT)
UPGRADE Premium Edition, £429 (£504 inc VAT) from Creative Suite 1.x, £569 (£669 inc VAT) from Photoshop; Standard Edition, £319 (£375 inc VAT) from Creative Suite 1.x, £349 (£410 inc VAT) from Photoshop
SUPPLIER Adobe Store via website   **INTERNET** www.adobe.co.uk
VERDICT The best way to get your hands on Adobe's graphics and publishing power for most users.

PC PRO A LIST

PC PRO RECOMMENDED

Adobe's Standard Edition of Creative Suite 2 provides exceptional power.

The advantages of buying one of the two Creative Suite editions rather than the separate applications are obvious. All the applications are designed to work together, producing high-quality, high-impact design as efficiently as possible. And the cost of both suites is significantly lower than the combined cost of their component apps.

As an overall package, Adobe Creative Suite 2 sees major advances on all fronts: a more powerful and consistent shared interface highlighted by Illustrator CS2's new Control palette; a more integrated workflow highlighted by the new ability to select layer comps in placed PSD files; a tighter underlying architecture highlighted by the centralised PDF export and colour management; and, bringing everything together, an entirely new graphics file manager in Adobe Bridge (*see p81*), designed to partner each of the applications, but also to act as a front end for the suite as a whole. To top it all, Adobe has even reduced the price, making the Standard Edition, in particular, stunning value.

It's impressive stuff, but think hard before you get out your credit card. To begin with, there are two suites to choose between: the Standard Edition, offering Photoshop/ImageReady, Illustrator and InDesign, and the Premium Edition, which adds GoLive and Acrobat Professional. The applications in the Standard Edition are natural partners, with Photoshop handling bitmaps, Illustrator vectors and InDesign bringing them together to produce the end publication. More to the point, each of these applications is best-of-breed, and each CS2 upgrade is a major boost to both productivity and creativity.

With the Premium Edition, it's a very different story. As each CS design application exports directly to PDF, having the latest Acrobat software is no longer essential and Acrobat 7 Professional isn't a clear must-have upgrade. The case for GoLive is even harder to make. Its focus on web authoring is semi-detached from the suite's core print-oriented structure, and this is a seriously underpowered upgrade to the one CS application that clearly isn't top of its class anyway.

Overall, there's no doubt that both editions of the Creative Suite offer extraordinary power and value, but additional power is only valuable if you use it. As such, you need to weigh both suites against your individual requirements: some users will benefit from the full power of the Premium Edition; others will be better off sticking to a single core application. For the majority, the Adobe Creative Suite 2 Standard Edition offers the best mix of wide-ranging but integrated design power at an unbeatable price.

TOM ARAH

PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★☆

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III; 512MB RAM; 2.4GB hard disk space; Windows 2000 (SP 3) onwards.