



Adobe Photoshop CS

**PC PRO
A LIST**

PRICE £413 (£485 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER www.simply.co.uk (code: YD78782)

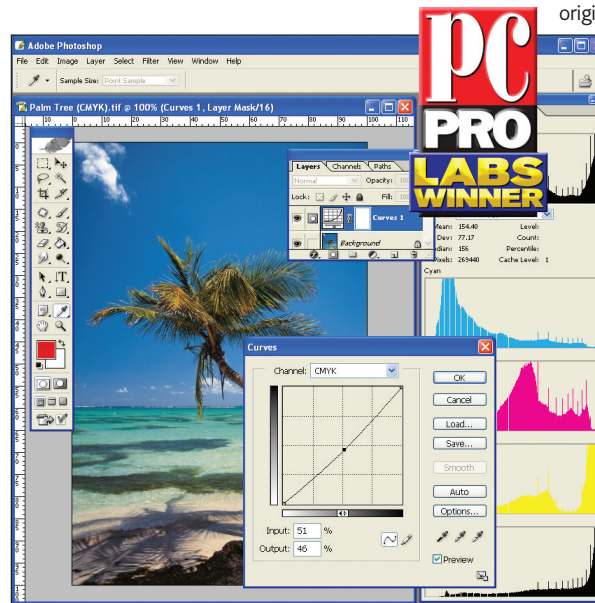
VERDICT Unrivalled editing and compositing power – but not the right choice for all users.

Photoshop so dominates the professional photo-editing market that effectively there's no competition.

The reason why certainly isn't immediately apparent when you first look at Photoshop's global adjustments. These are divided into two main sections. In the first are three automatic commands – Auto Levels, Auto Contrast and Auto Colour – alongside the main three interactive tone-map corrections, namely Levels, Curves and Colour Balance. Below these are a range of around a dozen adjustments such as the new Photo Filter command, which simulates the effects of traditional photographic lens filters, and the Channel Mixer, which is excellent for producing rich black-and-white versions of colour images.

All the main bases are covered but, when compared to, say, Paint Shop Pro 8 with its almost 50 adjustments, it's the handling that makes Photoshop really stand out. To begin with, the options for controlling each command are comprehensive. Then there's the excellent feedback with Photoshop CS's new Histogram palette showing live 'before and after' tone maps for each adjustment. The biggest difference though is in the sheer speed of Photoshop's number-crunching. This is especially essential for high-resolution images and also enables Photoshop CS to fully support 16-bit images, which boosts quality by maintaining a wider tonal range. Best of all, it enables Photoshop to provide all its main image adjustments as non-destructive and fine-tunable adjustment layers.

It's a similar story when it comes to local retouching. All the main bases are covered with dedicated dodge, burn, sponge (saturation), blur, sharpen and smudge tools, however there are no dedicated dust, scratch or red-eye removal tools. Using the Colour Replacement tool, though, you can remove red eye or indeed any other unwanted colour, while the Clone Stamp tool and the amazing Healing and Patch tools are excellent for blending imperfections away into their background. And with Photoshop's unique History Brush you can store various snapshots of an image to use as the source for painting, say to partially restore the original image or to locally and interactively apply a global filter.



High-end features such as its support for CMYK, 16-bit handling and non-destructive adjustments set Photoshop apart.



Photoshop also excels when it comes to layer-based photo-compositing.

Apart from its image enhancement capabilities, what makes Photoshop stand out is its ability to create seamless photocompositions from multiple images. Its selection capabilities are excellent, including the dedicated Extract dialog for isolating complex elements from their background, while Photoshop CS's new Match Colour adjustment is ideal for blending added elements into their new background. But the real secret of Photoshop's success is its layer-based compositing. This not only includes support for bitmap layers complete with control over global transparency and blend mode, but vector-based shape and text layers, layer masks to manage local transparency, layer styles to manage formatting effects, adjustment layers to apply non-destructive corrections and layer sets

to organise your composition. And now the latest Photoshop CS offers another exciting new option, Layer Comps, which enables you to freely experiment with different layer-based layouts and setups.

Using this power it's possible to create compositions that are indistinguishable from an original photograph, but Photoshop is also very capable of producing eye-catching creative artwork. The comprehensive Brush palette lets you control every aspect of your brush (or retouching tool for that matter) from its size and shape to its texture and colour dynamics. There are also a hundred creative filters included in the package and these are almost infinitely extensible through third-party Photoshop plug-ins. In short, Photoshop can take your photograph wherever you want to.

In terms of file management, Photoshop now offers an on-the-fly File Browser palette for handling multiple photos as thumbnails but it's generally awkward – you can rotate thumbnails, for example, but have to actually open the photo to rotate the image itself. Likewise with Photoshop CS's new improved Photo Merge command, which lets you stitch images together to create panoramas – but still not as effectively as the budget PhotoSuite.

Apart from Photoshop's excellent file export capabilities, the output options are the most disappointing area of all. The only way to print multiple photos per page, for example, is by creating a new page-sized image with the awkward Picture Package command. The script-based Web Gallery output is just as clumsy. And you can forget about emailing, producing slide-show presentations, archiving to CD and creating VCDs unless you buy the separately available Photoshop Album (see p124).

In a way though, this is missing the point. Photoshop CS just isn't aimed at the average digital camera user – it's a high-end tool for professionals targeting their output to commercial print. Here, Photoshop's advanced features, such as its profile-based colour management, monitor calibration, onscreen CMYK proofing, colour-separated output and tight integration with Adobe's other design applications really come into play. Alongside Photoshop's unrivalled pixel processing engine and layer-based compositing, it's a winning combination.

PC PRO RATINGS

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

► We provide a three-page guide to enhancing digital photos in Digital Creator this month. See p130.