

Adobe Photoshop CS3 Extended Review:
The Top Ten Reasons to Own Photoshop CS3 Extended
~ by Darrel Priebe

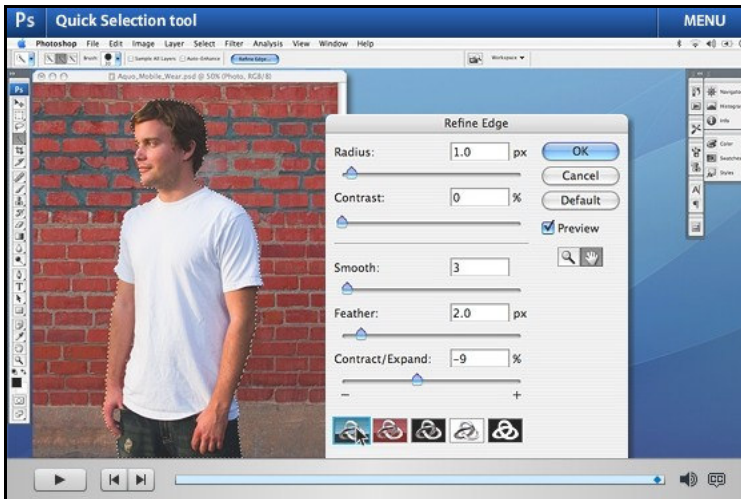
Less than a year ago three fellow TOPCC Photo Group members and I reviewed Adobe Photoshop CS2. Now Adobe's back with two new and improved versions of their venerable program for editing photographs and a whole lot more, CS3 Regular and Extended versions. The Extended version offers additional advanced tools for photographers and for those who make video, 3-D graphics, or do scientific/medical imaging.



What has changed in the last year that would make the photographic community sit up and take notice? And more importantly, lay out a good piece of pocket change for CS3? There are a lot of major and minor changes to the symphony of pixel manipulation tools that compose CS3, so I'll organize them for you into the *Top Ten Reasons to Own Photoshop CS3 Extended*.

Reason # 10. If you love great **Black & White** photography, you will love the new B&W adjustment layer in CS3. Most other programs simply desaturate an image to give you a B&W version, but that results in a flat, lackluster picture. To do it right and get rich vibrant B&W tones, you needed to use the individual color Channels in prior versions of Photoshop. But that's complicated. Now CS3 lets you easily create great B&W versions of your digital pictures with presets, or by simply clicking and dragging directly on the image. You can darken or richen a specific tone in the picture by click-dragging on that tone. As you drag, you'll see one of the 6 color sliders change up or down. Voila, a gorgeous B&W picture. Ansel Adams would be so jealous. Plus, you can quickly give the picture a sepia or duotone tint, and save your custom settings to use again.

Reason # 9. The **Quick Selection Tool**. If you have used the magic wand or color range tools to make a selection in the past, you probably found it difficult to make a quick and accurate selection. CS3 now offers a much better selection instrument, the Quick Selection Tool. Start with a large brush size, then click and drag around the object you want selected, just like you are painting it. Quick Selection does a great job in finding the edges of solid objects, especially if their color stands out from the background. Photoshop samples a range of colors or shades and draws a selection where it detects significant differences. There is some smart artificial intelligence at work here! Unfortunately, hair and fine detailed edges are still hard to capture accurately, and a Tolerance Setting would be a useful addition to this great new selection tool.



After you make your selection, Refine Edge previews it, and offers 5 control sliders to fine tune the selection edges. This is a big improvement over the old Feather command which simply blurred the edges of the selection. Refine Edge offers Radius and Contrast sliders for even more precise control of the selection size and edges.

For serious photo restorers, an interesting enhancement is the new Clone Source panel. Its Overlay option lets you see a semitransparent, tracing-paper-like version of the source image beneath the brush as you paint, making it easy to precisely position your pixels—no more flying blind as you clone. You can save up to 5 different sources for cloning, and you can clone from the layer just below your active layer! The Clone Source panel also lets you scale and rotate the pixels you're copying—great for special creative effects.

Reason # 8. Nondestructive Smart Filters. You can add, adjust, reorder, or remove filters from an image without having to resave the image or start over to preserve quality. Nondestructive Smart Filters allow you to preview and visualize changes without altering your original pixel data.

With each new version, Photoshop becomes less destructive and delivers new features that enable you to alter images without changing your original picture. In Photoshop CS3, you can, for the first time, apply image filters nondestructively. Select a layer and choose the Filter > Convert for Smart Filters command, and Photoshop converts the layer to a smart object where you can apply the filters. A smart filter also has a built-in layer mask, so you can selectively paint away parts of the filter's effects. Very nice indeed!

But this new feature does have a price. You must double-click on the Smart Object, make changes in a separate window, and then save and close to return to your image. And while being able to selectively turn filters off and on is convenient, when you turn a filter back on, Photoshop must perform the calculations all over again. The time it takes to calculate some filters on large resolution pictures can discourage experimentation because the changes take time to crank out. Of course, a faster computer will help that problem!

Reason # 7. Bridge. First off, Bridge 2 now has an eye-pleasing dark-gray background color. Bridge is the file organizing component of CS3, and it will organize your photos and other media or data files,

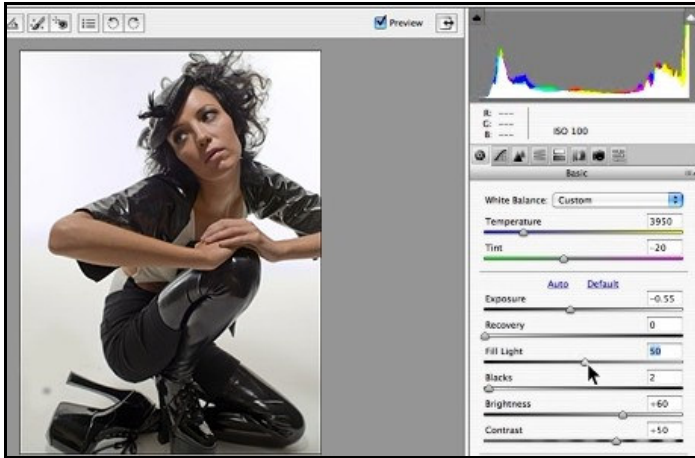
even previewing Flash files. The search or sort functions in Bridge are more powerful. You can filter or sort your pictures by type of file, such as all .pdf files, all .jpg's, etc. You can find all portraits vs landscape pictures, pictures modified today, etc. You can rate pictures from 1 to 4 stars and find them with one click. Best of all, the new Bridge can compare 2 or more pictures side-by-side by simply Control-clicking to select them. This is a great way to decide which picture is the best out of a group. Bridge CS3 can also group similar pictures into a space-saving stack. If you shoot 20 pics of a single subject, you can have all 20 stacked behind the first picture in the series to make viewing and sorting your photos less cumbersome.



Bridge is faster than before, a much needed improvement since it was dog-slow displaying new pictures. The new preferences settings default is for Quick Thumbnails, vs. High Quality Thumbnails, and this speeds up the process somewhat, but it's still not as fast as other photo-organizer programs. Even on a very fast Dual-Quad chip Mac with 4 Gb of Ram, it took a over a minute to sort and present 160 4-Mb jpg's, although the visual quality was very good. But once done, it remembers the thumbnails, and is very quick to re-display the same folder of pictures.

The horizontal filmstrip is one of 3 view options and a great way to view pictures in great detail on a large monitor. When you preview a picture, the cursor turns into a loop. Just click anywhere on the photo and it magnifies that portion, just like a loop magnifier! A cool new detail is the camera-like LCD display showing all the camera EXIF data such as shutter speed and exposure settings. Finally, the import pictures from camera (or card) function lets you rename them if desired (Getty Museum 001, etc.), make a back-up copy as you import, and imbed your name and copyright into each picture's metadata simultaneously, a great time saver!

Reason # 6. Camera Raw lets you open and adjust jpgs and tiffs, not just raw files. There are several intuitive and easy to use sliders to enhance your photos. Exposure lets you change the overall exposure of your photo, adding or subtracting light from the picture. The Fill Light slider lets you easily add a splash of fill light to your too-dark subject's face so it looks like you took your studio lighting set with you to Aunt Caroline's house. Vibrance is a new effect, a Smart Saturation tool if you will, that increases the color saturation of colors that are the least saturated. It's a very smooth way to enhance color without over doing the overall color saturation.



Camera raw continues to make nondestructive edits, and it now processes images with increased speed and superior conversion quality. You will spend less time in the main Photoshop window because Camera Raw offers all the tools you need for many photographs. It's compatible with Adobe Photoshop Lightroom software and supports over 150 camera models. Overall, the improvements in more powerful, intuitive and easy to use controls make Camera Raw one of the excellent improvements in Photoshop CS3, both Regular and Extended versions.

Reason # 5. It's Faster. Based on published reviews (<http://www.photoshopcafe.com/cs3/>), the start-up times for PC's running CS3 vs. CS2 are 20% faster with XP, and 40% faster with Vista, since it utilizes the 64 bit processing power for some tasks. The speed gain is even greater for Intel based Macs, over 40% faster for many tasks, since CS3 takes advantage of the faster processing from dual-core Intel chips. And the tools and image manipulations are processed faster too; it's up to 70% faster processing complex tasks like Smart Objects.

Reason # 4. The Streamlined Interface and palette management. The Tab key still hides or reveals the tool palettes, now called panels, but now the F-key toggles through 4, not 3, different screen views, changing the enlargement of the photograph's window and/or the color of the background layer with each press. You can quickly maximize screen space for editing while keeping essential tools accessible. Palettes are now arranged in convenient, self-adjusting docks that can be widened to full size or narrowed to icons or even a thin, self-revealing strip at the edge of your monitor. The main tool bar can be a longer single-column, or the traditional double-wide. In full-screen view, dragging the mouse to the edge of the screen reveals the palettes or tool bars awaiting there for easy access. Overall, the interface is more pleasing to the eye, and can be customized to your heart's content to hide or reveal the tools and palettes you use most often.

Reason # 3: Improved Photomerge technology and Printer Control

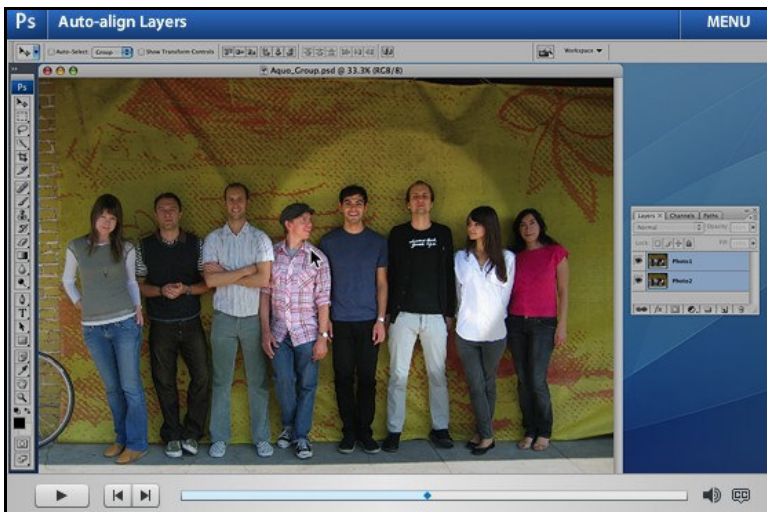
OK, this is really two reasons in one. The Photomerge tool in Photoshop CS3 benefits from the Auto-Align technology in the Extended version (see below) to make it one of the best photo-stitching programs available for making panoramic composites. CS3 now automatically locates similar parts of multiple photos, and shifts, shapes and blends them together into seamless panoramas using new layer-alignment and layer-blending capabilities. London fashion photographer Martin Evening has published a useful tutorial on the Photomerge technique at

<http://www.photoshopforphotographers.com/pscs3/download/sample-05.pdf>.

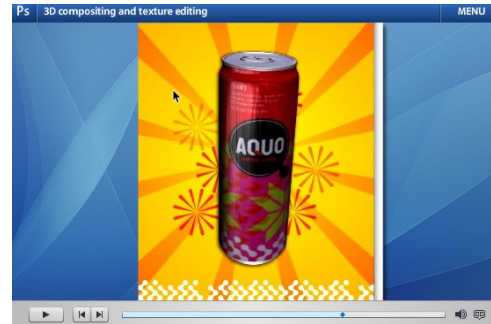
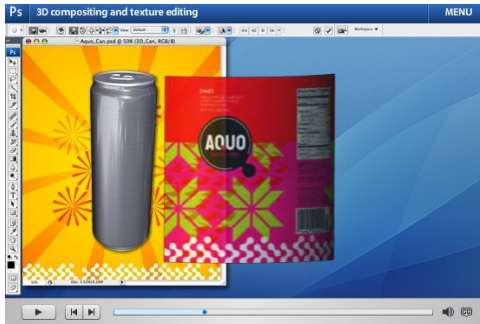
CS3 now offers better control over print quality with color management, a larger print preview window, and more controls in one place so you can print in fewer steps. Improved printing controls, co-developed by Adobe and HP, make printing easier and more predictable, and streamline setup options via integration with select printers from HP, Epson, and Canon.

Reason # 2: CS3's Extended Features. CS3 Extended comes with a host of specialized features for advanced photography, video makers, medical/scientific technicians, 3-D animation artists, architects, and educators.

- ✓ Advanced Compositing – A brand new tool for photographers that looks like more of that old Photoshop magic. Auto-Align automatically aligns two or more images after you place them on separate layers, to take the best elements of each picture into one picture, and the Auto-Blend Layers command blends the color and shading to create a smooth, seamless result. For example, if a great group photo has one person's eyes closed, but their eyes are open in the next picture (but it's not otherwise useable), Auto Align will automatically align the two pictures so you can easily clone (from the layer below) the eyes-open individual into the first photo, producing a perfect group shot! It works best for sequential pictures taken on a tripod, but still works for non-tripod shots made in quick succession. London fashion photographer Martin Evening has published a useful tutorial on the Auto Align technique at <http://www.photoshopforphotographers.com/pics3/download/sample-05.pdf>.

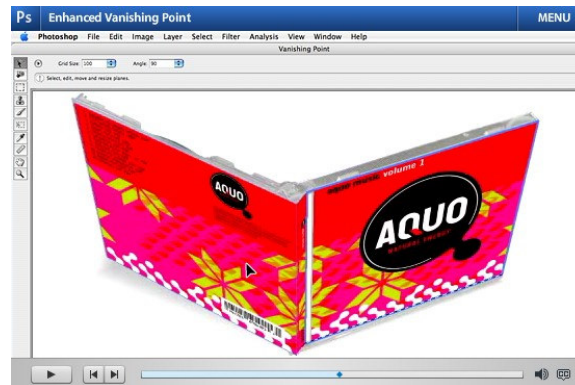
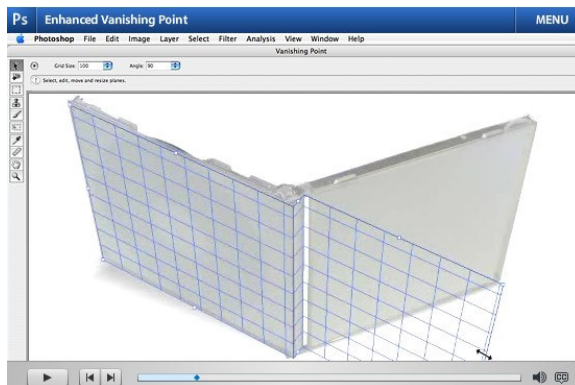


- ✓ 3D compositing and texture editing. You can take 3D objects made in animation programs and add 2D textures onto the 3D models directly within Photoshop Extended and immediately see the results. (See illustrations below.)



2D Aquo label warped and wrapped around a 3D can

- ✓ **Movie Paint.** You can enhance video frames directly within Photoshop Extended. Paint, add text, and clone over multiple frames of an imported video sequence. Great for adding explosions, laser FX or your company logo to your video epics! Anything you can do in Photoshop can be added to video clips in every different file type, from .avi to Quicktime.
- ✓ **2D and 3D measurement tools.** You can measure the size of objects accurately with CS3 Extended's new measurement tools. Just set the scale of an image, and then use any of the Photoshop Extended selection tools to define and calculate distance, perimeter, area, and other measurements.
- ✓ **Enhanced Vanishing Point with 3D support.** Wrap your grandkids' pictures around a book or a building! Edit in perspective on multiple surfaces, even those connected at angles other than 90 degrees. (See illustration below)



Vanishing Point will wrap pictures around objects even at unusual angles.

- ✓ **Enhanced 32-bit high dynamic range (HDR) support.** If you like to take hi-res pictures you can combine two photos shot with a tripod to capture the bright highlights and darkest shadows in the same picture by combining multiple exposures into a single 32-bit image that preserves the full tonal range of a scene. With Photoshop CS3 Extended, you can even edit 32-bit images using all the regular brushes, filters, blending modes, transformations, selections, tools, aspect ratios, and more.

Reason # 1. Impress yourself and your friends. Hands-down, Photoshop is the most popular photo editing program on the market. Your family and friends will be impressed when you tell them, "I Photoshop'd this picture." Although some people still complain that Photoshop is too complex and hard to learn, there are many excellent sources for training on the web. While many training programs

or web sites are costly, there is one, my very own (shameless plug intended), that is inexpensive and teaches you all the basic Photoshop skills a photographer needs: www.DazzlingPhotography.com Photoshop is not too hard to learn if you are interested and use good resources. The rewards in high-quality photographic prints are rich if you invest the time and effort.

Conclusion: Photoshop is hands-down the best photo management and image enhancement program on the market today. It's not for the person who takes occasional snapshots. It is for the dedicated photographer and student of photography who loves the joy of discovering beautiful pictures through the magic of the digital darkroom. The improvements in CS3 are substantial, and if you are dedicated to being the best photographer you can be, you will want this upgrade. If you are using Photoshop Elements, its time to think about making the step up to gain the advanced tools in CS3 Regular or Extended versions. It's an investment in you and your art, and isn't that worth the price?

Price, Info & Resources: So should you consider Photoshop CS3 or its Extended cousin? If you're into video, 3-D graphics, scientific and medical imaging, or you want the way-cool Auto-Align & Auto-Blend features, then CS3 Extended is for you.

The upgrade to CS3 costs \$199, and \$349 for CS3 Extended. The upgrade prices are only available for owners of Photoshop 7.0 or newer. Full retail versions are \$649 for CS3, and \$999 for CS3 Extended. The most affordable way to buy is through academic pricing for faculty & students which offers substantial savings if you meet the qualifications. My advice? Sign-up for a Photoshop class at the local adult school, get a student I.D., and buy the academic version. The prices are listed below.

Academic Superstore offers CS3 Extended for students and faculty for \$290 at:

<http://www.academicsuperstore.com/item/index.html?tname=Photoshop&sourcecode=lcg&promocode=010714NQ> Amazon.com recently offered CS3 for \$642 or an upgrade version for \$196 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/search?ie=UTF8&keywords=photoshop%20cs3&tag=prisonbreak0b-20&index=software&linkCode=ur2&camp=1789&creative=9325>

You can download a 30-day **free trial** of Photoshop CS3 Extended at this web site. If you are using an older version, or Elements, I encourage you to give it a try when you have the time to play and explore the great new features: <https://www.adobe.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=photoshop>

System Requirements: Minimum Windows Computer System Requirements for CS3: Intel® Xeon™, Xeon Dual, Intel Centrino™, or Pentium® III or 4 processor. Microsoft® Windows® 2000 with Service Pack 4, or Windows XP with Service Pack 2; 320MB of RAM (384MB recommended); 650MB of available hard-disk space, 1,024x768 monitor resolution with 16-bit video card, CD-ROM drive, Internet or phone connection required for product activation.

Adobe Photoshop CS3 is manufactured by Adobe Systems Incorporated, 345 Park Avenue, San Jose, CA 95110. www.adobe.com. Tech support: complimentary resources available on the Adobe website; person-to-person support re: installation and product defects. Paid support plans available through Adobe Expert Support.