

## Software Review

# Photoshop CS4 and CS4 Extended

*Review by Maria O. Arguello*

**Product:** Photoshop CS4 and CS4 Extended

**Company:** Adobe

**Price:** Full, \$699.95; Upgrade, \$199.95;

Extended, \$999; upgrade, \$349

**Requirements:** PowerPC® G5 or multicore

Intel® processor; OS 10.4.11-10.5.4 or

later; see [adobe.com](http://adobe.com) for more details

**Test System:** Mac Pro Dual-Core Intel, Mac OS X 10.5.5

**Rating:** 4.5 out of 5 Apples

There are two editions of Photoshop CS4. If you work in film, video, multimedia, 3D, manufacturing, architecture, engineering, medicine, or science, Photoshop Extended is for you. If not, then Photoshop CS4 will serve you well. There are so many new features in CS4 which take advantage of Open GL to render screen effects such as Rotate View, dynamic brush resizing, pixel tossing, enhanced navigation, and more. Another technology called seam carving allows you to resize your images so your focal point remains unchanged. In step with these, comes a real 3-D engine, new Masks and Adjustments panels, and selective editing in Camera Raw, among many other new features.

One of my favorite features in Photoshop CS4 is the enhanced navigation, thanks to the support for Open GL. Open GL is built into most video cards; it lets you zoom and pan ever so smoothly. There are no more bad zoom levels with choppy interactions between pixels, keeping you from gauging sharpness or edges when viewing at 66.7%. Now every zoom level is beautiful. Continuous zoom is always smooth. If you zoom in far enough, you get the pixel grid which is a border between independent pixels to gauge where one pixel starts and another stops. Navigator Palettes are no longer needed to navigate within a zoomed image. Simply press and hold the H key to get the hand tool and then click and hold the mouse, you zoom out from the image and have a rectangular box to move it to another area. Let go of the mouse and you're in the new location immediately. You can still drag the old way with the spacebar but now you can 'toss' the image to get around very quickly.

Photoshop CS4 sports a new Interface with the Application Frame. By default the Application Frame fits everything in one window with tabs, but you can turn it off to work in a more Mac-like environment. When turned on all of Photoshop's windows and panels stay together as you move things around and resizing the frame automatically resizes your panels and windows to fit inside the frame. You also have a variety of different window configurations to work with. Using them makes it easy to compare several open documents with each other.

The Arrange Documents menu lets you see several documents at the same time. At the top of the frame you'll notice a new row of tools called the Application Bar. This is handy for working with many documents at the same time, along with the very new Rotate View tool. By using Rotate View you can spin your canvas, but not the pixels, to view it at an angle.

Palettes are now Panels. The Panels also behave differently. One feature lets you set independent super groups which can be placed on other monitors if you have them. Or you can let the panels float. To save your customized panel configuration as a workspace, use the new option Essentials that brings up a menu which includes Save Workspace. Workspace presets are prominently positioned at the top right bar. From there you can view What's New in CS4.

There are new masks and adjustment panels. With the new Masks panel you can create a layer mask from a selection and then feather it on the fly. Adobe also added buttons for Refine Edges and Color Range functions for more mask adjustments.

Content-Aware Scale (CAS) is the latest miracle of imaging technology in Photoshop CS4. When I say jaw-dropping, I mean it. It does miracles but when it goes bad, it really goes bad. The familiar Free Transform takes on super powers. Photoshop analyzes your image and alters unimportant areas. To safeguard and protect your image from distortion, you can prepare an alpha channel first, to avoid unwanted and unexpected artifacts. This tool is useful for fitting an image into a small space without cropping, or enlarging an image to get a needed output size.

# Review of Photoshop CS4 and CS4 Extended

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Smart objects have been improved. You can move the smart object and a mask as a group when you link it. You can also apply perspective distortions to a smart object.

The enhanced Bridge 3.0 included in Photoshop CS4 is an independent program that lets you inspect the contents of a folder, evaluate an image, organize images, sort by .JPEG or .NEF (RAW), or camera. New in Bridge 3.0 are the Workspaces that can be modified rather than saving each. You can also see the path of your folder. You can now use the loop tool on multiple images. There are new keyboard shortcuts in Bridge such as using the scroll wheel with the Command key to zoom in the view throughout Photoshop CS4.

The new Camera 5.0 plug-in has many major improvements such as the Adjustment Brush. When you use it on your Camera Raw image it creates a mask that hides the adjustment from the other areas of your image. You are free to adjust to heart's content even after you've finished painting. You will also find the Graduated Filter tool which you apply by clicking and dragging. What you're

really doing is creating a gradient mask that hides the adjustment from the rest of the image. As with the Adjustment Brush, you can safely tweak as much as you wish.

In Photoshop CS4 Extended there are new tools in the Tools panel for 3D aficionados. The Surfaces, and Create UV Overlays. I have a friend who creates life-size 3D human models which Photoshop CS4 will aid in immensely.

I was disappointed to see these useful plugins disappear: Extract Filter, Contact Sheets, PDF Presentations, and Picture Package. But the older versions of these plug-ins still work. Whew. If you want PDF Presentations, you can download them from the Adobe site or get them from Photoshop CS3.

The changes in Photoshop CS4 and Photoshop CS4 Extended make CS4 a must-have. There are so many new features that once you use them, you are spoiled; you won't want to do without. The lack of 64-bit compatibility on the Mac is not a deal breaker; hopefully it will come in Photoshop CS5. You will miss it if you work with files larger than 4 GigaBytes.