

## The Upgrade From Marketing

*Topic:* A review of the just-released Photoshop 7.

*Column first appeared:* June 2002, *Electronic Publishing* magazine.

*Source of this file:* The author's draft as submitted to the magazine.

*Author's comment:* Looking back on this eleven years later, I see nothing to change the negative assessment of this release. Adobe later corrected every one of the flaws noted in this column, with the exception of the removal of the safety feature to prevent saving layered TIFFs.

My points did not come as a surprise to the Photoshop team, as I had made them vociferously during the beta period. Now that they have been proven correct (by the fact that Adobe reinstated previous behavior either immediately or in the next full release) one might expect a few words of thanks for having advised them to avoid trouble, but nothing of the sort ensued.

In an online group, a user explained why he would not purchase the new release: "The new 'Photoshop always complains if you don't have the composite turned on when saving in PSD format' and 'Photoshop always marks a file changed if you open a file and discard the embedded profile' bits are EAB (excessively annoying behavior). Fix that, and I may upgrade, but for right now I'm afraid that I'll take a pass."

Chris Cox of the Photoshop programming team, with his usual grace, responded as follows: "It sounds like you listened to Dan Margulises piss and vinegar before getting any real facts....Dan's little rant should not be treated as a review—just a list of things that Dan doesn't like, and things that don't fit with Dan's narrow world view."

I never got an apology for that, but the user got his satisfaction. The behavior of having Photoshop issue a warning that must be responded to whenever we save a layered file without a composite image as well (which is something a sophisticated user would rarely do), new in Photoshop 7, was eliminated less than two years later in Photoshop CS and has never been heard of again.

The change in profile handling didn't even last that long. As I had warned, it literally made Photoshop unusable for certain of us. Realizing this, Adobe released an emergency corrective update, eliminating that behavior, less than a month after Chris Cox's comments.

This archive, to be released over several years, collects the columns that Dan Margulis wrote under the *Makeready* title between 1993 and 2006. In some cases the columns appear as written; in others the archive contains revised versions that appeared in later books.

*Makeready* in principle could cover anything related to graphic arts production, but it is best known for its contributions to Photoshop technique, particularly in the field of color correction. In its final years, the column was appearing in six different magazines worldwide (two in the United States).

Dan Margulis teaches small-group master classes in color correction. Information is available at <http://www.ledet.com/margulis>. Many other articles and edited threads from his *appliedcolortheory* group are available there or at <http://www.moderncolorworkflow.com>

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# The Upgrade From Marketing

Photoshop 7 doesn't offer nearly as many new features as past upgrades. And it adds several workflow-busting changes, sometimes for reasons other than the well-being of Photoshop users.

**D**uring one Windows development cycle, Bill Gates was alleged to have declared, "It isn't done till Lotus won't run." As it turned out, Lotus, which commanded the spreadsheet market at the time, did not require the help of Mr. Gates to self-destruct, and today we all use Microsoft Excel.

The slogan for the latest version of Photoshop might well be, "our upgrade's broke if Quark don't choke." While the release has a few useful new features, they're outweighed, for many users, especially for larger ones such as service providers, by several coercive changes that harm workflows. The TIFF format has been seriously degraded, the Photoshop format made more difficult to use, and even the simple process of opening and closing a series of files has been turned into a major production for many users.

Several, although not all, of these damaging changes are plainly aimed at favoring other Adobe products. Taken as a whole, the release smacks of being prepared by the marketing department with little concern for the welfare of the users.

The marketing focus starts with the name. Calling this "Photoshop 7" is, by standards of past Photoshop upgrades, a considerable stretch. There are real improvements here, but a fraction as many as in Photoshops 5 and 6. The main significance for many will be that it runs natively in Mac OS X (9.1 is the minimum configuration) and Windows XP.

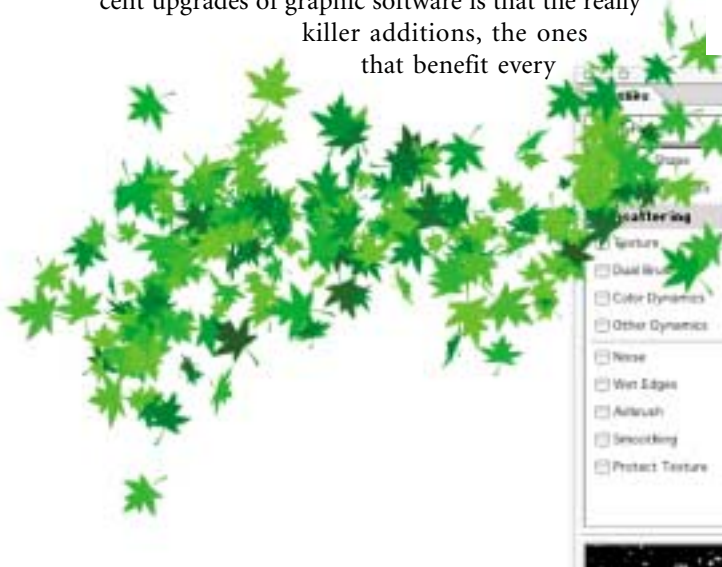
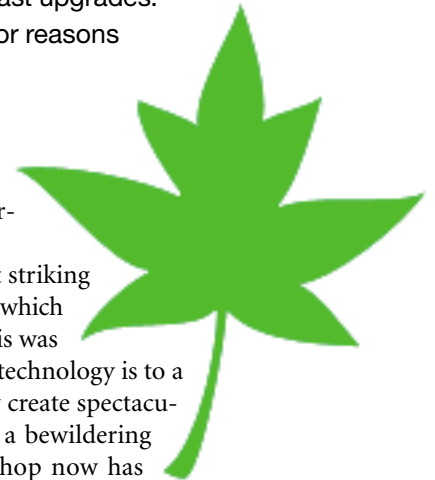
For professionals, it doesn't take much to justify \$150 for an upgrade to the prime imaging program—one significant feature will do. The problem for all recent upgrades of graphic software is that the really killer additions, the ones that benefit every

user, have long since been made. So, we get features that excite certain of us and not others.

Brush functionality is the most striking program improvement, the one of which we can say, what we had before this was to Photoshop 7 as daguerreotype technology is to a digital camera. We can now easily create spectacularly shaped brushes and impose a bewildering variety of special effects. Photoshop now has many of the capabilities of Procreate's Painter, and allows effects such as the one below, the work of Photoshop illustrator and guru Bert Monroy.

The leaves at lower left were created with a single brush-stroke based on one shape. The seeming randomness of hue, frequency, rotation, and scaling is all governed by flexible new controls.

**Photoshop 7's brush options far exceed what was available in past Photoshop versions. The leaf collage at bottom left was created in a single sweep of a custom brush that deposits modified versions of the maple leaf graphic at top right. The excruciatingly fine-tunable controls over how each leaf varies from its neighbors are found in several dialog boxes, of which three are shown here.**



**The File Browser function displays and even sorts thumbnails of any folder's contents, a godsend for those who store files by number rather than name.**

Along with a companion, a "Pattern Maker", these brushes can pay for the upgrade several times over, if you happen to be a digital painter like Mr. Monroy, or if you do heavy-duty special-effects retouching.

Photoshop 7 adds four or five such capabilities, things that make it irresistible—to certain users. This is about in line with previous Photoshop half-number upgrades. It doesn't begin to compare with the upgrade to Photoshop 6, which had ten, and Photoshop 5, which introduced a robust 15.

The new brushes, the sharply improved Liquify filter, and the Pattern-

Maker aren't every user's cup of tea. The new Healing Brush and its cousin, the Patch tool, have more general appeal.

These are dustbusters with brains. They try to cover up scratches, dirt, or other defects by analyzing the pattern of other similar areas that we point out to them. One mimics the existing clone tool but does the job better; the other allows us to "move" another area on top of the damaged one.

For me, the nicest new feature is a File Browser. Point to a folder, and Photoshop 7 delivers a thumbnail of every image inside it. This is great for digicam users, who often identify files by number only, and need a quick way to tell which one is which. The thumbnail is large enough for us to do so, although not large enough to evaluate image quality.

And there's the rub. The File Browser, tempting as it is, won't be enough to persuade my fellow Nikon users, and apparently some Canoners as well, to move to Photoshop 7, which basically makes it impossible to open and close files from these cameras in a logical way.

**The warning that cries wolf**

The Photoshop development team has a long and proud history of transforming simple color concepts into things that nobody can use. But of all the screwed-up things it has ever

done, the one that most palpably gains zero while inconveniencing the maximum number of people, is the following, which nails not just users of the at least above-mentioned cameras, but service providers and anyone else who ever works with files containing profiles embedded by strangers.

For the camera users, there are actually two changes involved. The first is only mildly annoying by itself, but, like a binary nerve gas, is deadly in combination with the other.

Files from these cameras contain a bug/feature in the form of a tag that previous versions of Photoshop ignored but Photoshop 7 sees. For arcane technical reasons, it was difficult, and probably undesirable, for the camera manufacturers to tag the files as anything other than sRGB, a bland, dark definition that doesn't describe these cameras properly at all.

If you don't understand the above paragraph, never mind. Ignore, also, Adobe's inexcusable failure to research the issue and find out, as it now concedes, that the profiles it has programmed Photoshop 7 to honor are always wrong. If that were the only change, every time we opened such a file into our own color settings, we would get a profile mismatch error message, until we wised up and turned that warning off, a move that is not particularly desirable but works.

Ignoring the embedded tag is normal practice for anyone who just wishes to inspect files under known color settings. Service providers, as well as photographers using the affected cameras, open files this way hundreds of times a day.

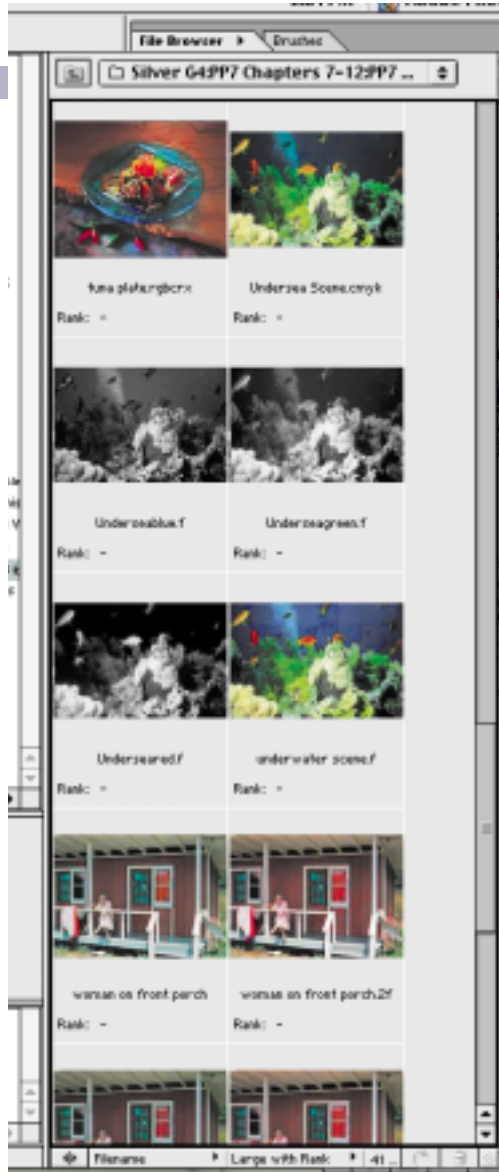
This is no sweat in Photoshop 6 or any other sane application. Incredibly, though, Photoshop 7 considers that the very act of so opening the file constitutes a change, even if we close the file immediately with no alteration at all.

A photographer who opens 100 images simultaneously, just to see which ones are good and which ones trash fodder, can't close them without getting 100 prompts to save the file. A service provider who has to open client files to verify that they have sufficient resolution will find that many less-skilled employees will do just what the dialog box suggests: open, and then save the "change." The "changed" file will have a different modification date from the one the client submitted, and it will be impossible to figure out what has happened.

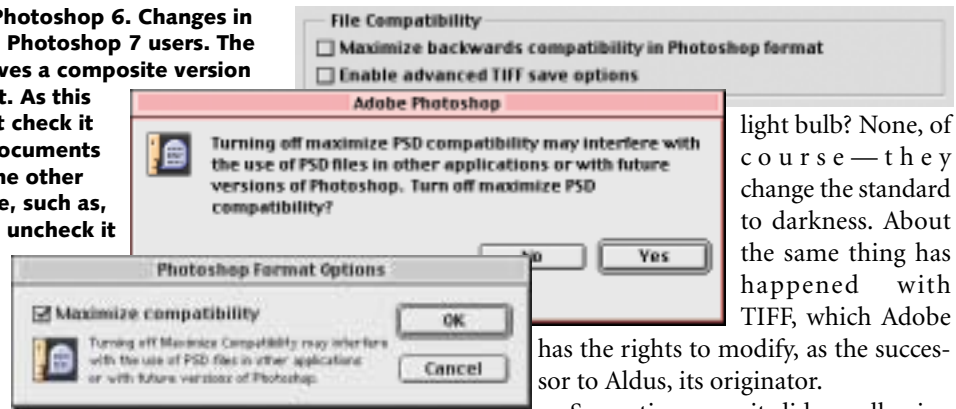
To these concerns, Adobe's suggestions are:

- 1) Complain to the camera manufacturer and to the client about their messed-up profiles. (What we will say when they ask why it wasn't a problem in Photoshop 6 is unclear.)
- 2) Create a hot key that forces files to close regardless of any warning message that may appear. (This is something that anyone with production experience will put right next to the key that formats one's hard drive without warning.)
- 3) Set up a Photoshop action to resave all the files with a new profile before opening them. (A more obvious option, if you are one of those seriously affected, is to stick with Photoshop 6. Being able to open and close files expeditiously is not an unreasonable request of any application.)

If the idea of responding to bogus warnings doesn't thrill, you also won't be pleased with what happens when saving



The box at top right comes from Photoshop 6. Changes in its functioning threaten to torture Photoshop 7 users. The “backwards compatibility” box saves a composite version along with each layered document. As this can double file size, one shouldn’t check it unless one plans to interchange documents with users of Photoshop 2, or some other program that requires a composite, such as, for example, Adobe InDesign. But uncheck it in Photoshop 7, and the second warning comes up. Say Yes a second time, and the warning at bottom will still appear each and every time you save a new layered file from then on.



light bulb? None, of course — they change the standard to darkness. About the same thing has happened with TIFF, which Adobe has the rights to modify, as the successor to Aldus, its originator.

PSD (Photoshop format) files. Nor will you be overjoyed about the *absence* of warnings when you try to save TIFFs with a certain defect. Both relate to changes in the Photoshop 6 preference box shown at the top of this page.

**This warning is spam is spam is spam is spam**

In 1994, Photoshop 3 revolutionized desktop imaging with its introduction of layers. This posed a problem for those still using Photoshop 2, who could not read layered files unless Photoshop 3 users saved them with a composite version attached. Since adding this composite sharply increases file size, most users, even in the heyday of Photoshop 3, availed themselves of the option to turn it off. And, as copies of Photoshop 2 are now about as common as slide rules, virtually everybody who’s aware of this preference has it turned off now.

This, unfortunately, conflicts with the goals of the marketing department. Although some competitive programs, like Corel’s Photo-Paint, read Photoshop layers directly and don’t need a composite, Adobe’s InDesign and Illustrator do. Hence, a change in Photoshop behavior.

Now, when we turn off adding the composite, we get a new warning, threatening that future versions of Photoshop may not read our files if we proceed.

Fair enough. It’s a free country; the marketing department is entitled to try to talk us out of being logical if it likes. One can get riled up, however, at what happens next.

If we have explicitly chosen this option in preferences, and then we have seen this second warning and explicitly said that we understand that the marketing department doesn’t like it but that we want to do it anyway, it won’t matter. Each and every time we save a new layered file, Photoshop 7 will warn us that we ought to save a composite, and require us to reconfirm, over, and over, and over again, that we don’t wish to. Fifty times a day, now and forever. It can’t be turned off.

Adobe correctly points out that storage has gotten cheap, so doubling file size unnecessarily isn’t as big a deal as it used to be. That is so, but some of us do backups, and wish them neither to take twice as long nor require twice as many CDs.

**The warning that isn’t there**

How many Microsoft programmers does it take to change a

TIFFs to contain layers and/or JPEG and ZIP compression. This made several vendors happy, but few users: TIFF is a critical production format with well-entrenched, reliable workflows. Most of us are extremely disinterested in testing whether unnecessarily large or interestingly compressed files will actually image. Plus, we prefer not to clog our networks and backups with TIFFs that are three or four times the size they need to be.

Photoshop 6 sensibly requires those wishing to light up this powderkeg to indicate (one time only, mind you) that they are doing so on purpose. They must check the “Advanced TIFF” preference shown above. A few brave souls have done so, but basically the options withered on the vine.

That the concept has failed on its merits, however, isn’t good news for the marketing department—if these formats make it into wide circulation, it’ll be tough on the competition, none of whom can read the exotic compressions, although most can at least place a layered TIFF. InDesign and Illustrator, naturally, do read them.

These options in Photoshop 7 are not only on by default, they can’t be turned off, no matter how much one wishes to avoid employing them. This will cause havoc among those who won’t notice the tiny warning in the lower corner of the save box that a layer is being saved with the TIFF. Plus, many people are apt not to understand that while a JPEG is a file in an industry-standard, widely used format, a JPEG TIFF is something that limits one to Adobe products. The unhelpful warning message (which, unlike the PSD warning, can be turned off) informs us, “JPEG compression is not supported in older TIFF readers.” And indeed, JPEG TIFFs can’t be read by Adobe’s older software. Everybody else’s *new* readers won’t read them—not Quark 5, not PhotoPaint 10, not CorelDraw 10, not Microsoft Publisher.

Photoshop 6 broke Quark’s handling of clipping paths; Photoshop 7 forces novices to save TIFFs that Quark can’t read but InDesign can.

Whether for layered TIFFs or those with exotic compressions, a more accurate warning would read: “You are selecting an unusual and nontraditional option, one that works in Photoshop but that either isn’t supported by or hasn’t been tested in a number of today’s leading applications. While we



In Photoshop 7, "Advanced" TIFF options can't be disabled. Users are likely to be confused by the option to save in the familiar -sounding JPEG format (left), and won't be helped by the warning below. Not just older TIFF readers, but any TIFF reader other than that found in Adobe products will not read such a file. Meanwhile, the protection against saving a TIFF with layers attached is even weaker (right).



don't know for a fact that it won't work down the line, we also can't guarantee that it will. Use these formats responsibly and cautiously."

Both I and every other expert I know of recommended retaining the Photoshop 6 structure that requires users who want to use these TIFF options to check off a preferences box, just as every expert opposed the endless warning that hampers saving in PSD format. But the marketing department doesn't have to listen to us, and didn't.

**Where warnings are warranted**

There are probably users today who have good reasons to save composites with their flattened PSDs. I don't know any of them, but they probably exist. A few more people, some of whom I do know, want to use some of the expanded TIFF options. Both groups are a tiny minority of Photoshop users.

Both of these groups should be allowed to do their thing. Quality software allows many different workflows to be used without pain. Requiring those few people who want to use these appealing but dangerous TIFF options to check off a preference, one time, that they wish to do so is hardly coercive, and has the advantage that the vast majority who do not wish to will not have accidents.

Contrast this treatment of a small minority with the marketing department's treatment of the huge majority, and you'll see why Photoshop 7 leaves such a sour taste. In one case, the majority is hit with warning after meaningless warning against doing something that is perfectly standard and not at all hazardous to health. In the actually dangerous situation, not only is there no warning of any significance but the interface is designed to provoke those who would never use the options on purpose to use them by accident.

These, then, are the major pros and cons of Photoshop 7. Few of us are affected in the same way; we each have to make

our own decisions on how to go forward. An artist probably wants the program, warts and all. A solo practitioner may be little affected by some of these changes and find the upgrade worthwhile. For a service provider, it creates far too many problems to be worth a moment's consideration.

For myself, I'm less affected by the TIFF problem than a service provider would be, although I'll admit to having accidentally saved a couple with options I didn't want. As for the other new features, I'd be glad to have them, but would only use them a few times a week. I save layered PSD files several times a day, though, and am not interested in being spammed every time.

Therefore, I regretfully made the decision that, when the beta period ended, I would put Photoshop 7 back in its box and hope that by the time of Photoshop 8 there will be a return to the Adobe tradition of putting users first and letting the marketing department fend for itself.

I decided this before learning that PS 7's color management rendered my Nikon camera nearly unusable, which turned a close call into a no-brainer.

Even if the decision were much harder, I'd be sorely tempted to stay with 6 just because, as you may have gathered, I dislike upgrades from marketing. Upgrades that don't have all the new bells and whistles we'd like are an unavoidable fact of life. Upgrades from monopolists whose purpose is to damage politically incorrect workflows aren't.

We can all applaud the new brushes, healing and otherwise, the patch tool, the file browser, and most of all, the difficult programming that enables Photoshop to exploit the new operating systems.

But in our industry, one Microsoft is enough.

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 Photoshop 7 officially shipped on April 15. This column discusses features found in the final beta version. Contributing editor **Dan Margulis** (DMargulis@aol.com) is author of Professional Photoshop 6. For information on his color-correction tutorials in Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, and San Diego, call Sterling Ledet & Associates at 877-819-2665. To join Dan's on-line color discussion group, visit [www.ledet.com/margulis](http://www.ledet.com/margulis).