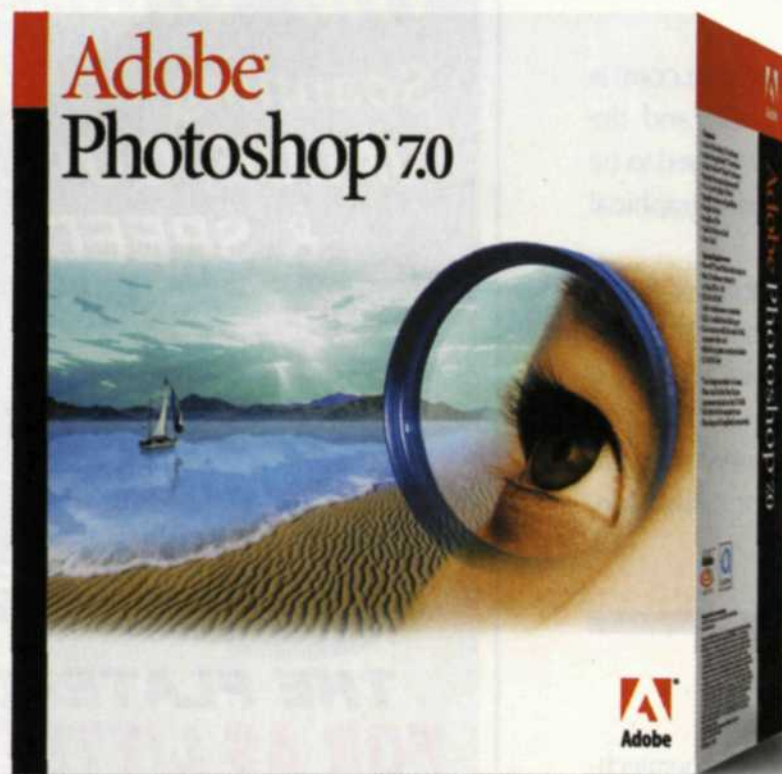# DIGITAL DIRECTIONS

IS Here— and How!

(above) A shot of the various Photoshop 7 menus on the Windows platform. (right) The new File Manager allows you to view thumbnail versions of each file before you load the file. No more guessing or using other programs! You also have the option of changing the way the display looks.

Upgrading software has become a normal part of maintenance in today's digital photo lab. The problem is knowing when to upgrade and what benefits justify an upgrade. First there is the added cost for single or multiple versions and then there is the compatibility issue. Just how much adjustment will be necessary to use the new program? What makes this newer version worth the expense and bother?
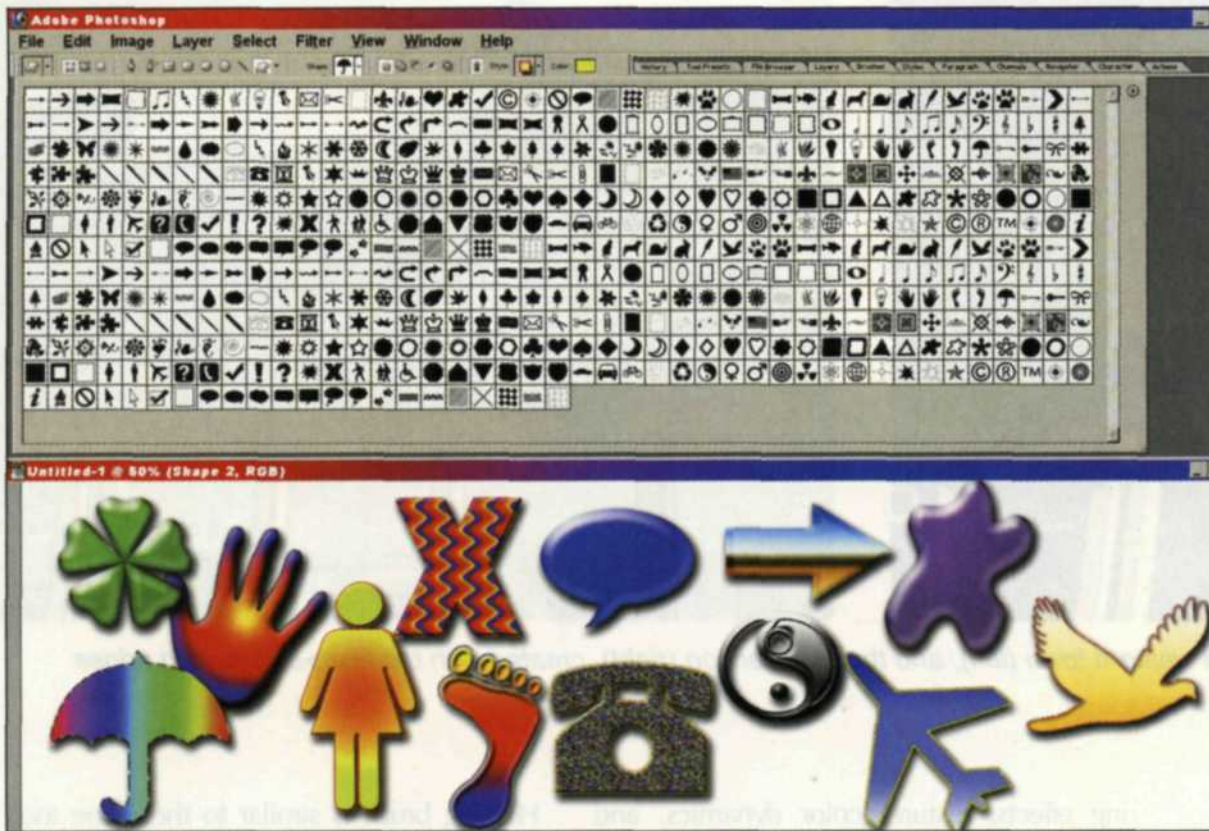
The symbol menu can now look at all the symbol libraries at the same time, and as you drag and drop each symbol, Photoshop creates a new layer for that symbol. Styles like emboss, bevel and shadow can then be applied from the styles menu.

SHADOW TOY BEVEL BLANKET SUN STAR GLOW MOUSEOVER STROKE SLIME CHROME

Jack and Sue Drafahl

MANY LABS WILL be asking these and more questions as Adobe Photoshop 7 enters the scene. Photoshop 6 is already an excellent program for editing images and is considered the standard in the industry. Just what did Adobe have up its sleeve that would make you consider the upgrade? As it turns out, plenty—so let's get started!

Photoshop 7.0 looks and feels much like 6.0, so editing techniques require only minor adjustments. When you first open Photoshop 7, the two most visible changes are the palette well and the toolbox.

Palette Well and Toolbox Upgrade

The palette well is a great tool for the image editor who performs repeated tasks. In previous versions of Photoshop, you had only two choices for palettes—hey could float on the editing screen and get in your way, or they could be closed when you were done. This new palette well allows you to dock the palettes you use consistently. If you need a specific palette, merely touch the appropriate tab in the well and the palette immediately opens. When you are through,

Here's a stock color negative image of a western town (left), and the new version (right), created with the filter>stylize>find edges pulldown menu.

it automatically closes.

The toolbox features two new tools called the healing brush and patch tool. An added feature with 7 is that as you pass the mouse pointer over a tool, your selection will colorize. A flyout script explaining the tool's function is still present in version 7.

More Features to Choose From

One of the best features Adobe introduced is a thumbnail file browser, which comes docked by default. No longer do you have to depend on other programs to search for a specific image. Once you open the file browser, you can go directly to a specific folder on your data drive, and thumbnails are quickly created in the menu. Simply select specific images and drag them onto your editing screen and you are ready to rotate them, sort images, change file names or change the preview size. Clicking on a thumbnail will provide a larger preview in a separate window, listing the image properties including any digital camera information.

If you often use the brush palette in your image editing, you will be thrilled with the new brush engine. When you first open the brush palette, you will see each brush displayed in the new brush stroke format, which shows you how it will look on the screen. You also have the option of changing it back to the older brush format. This new brush engine allows you more creative control of how the brush is applied to your image. You can change shape, size, scatter-

ing effects, texture, color dynamics, and more than a dozen other controls, which makes the brush palette one of the most creative controls in the new version of Photoshop.

Photoshop 7 also gives you the freedom to customize the tools you use most and access them quickly and easily. Best of all, it is simple to create custom tool presets. Just load the tool you want to customize, make your changes, and then add the new tool to the tool preset menu in the upper left corner of the edit screen.

You can also design a custom workspace with your specific palettes and tools. Just load your workspace in and magically the screen appears with all the tools and functions the way you like them. If you have several people sharing the same workstation, you can each have your own set of custom tools saved under a different name in the custom tool menu. This really helps to create harmony in the workplace.

The Newest Tools

If you haven't heard enough to convince you to upgrade to 7, then the two new tools will cinch the deal. The Healing brush and the Patch tool are two of the most sophisticated editing tools we have ever seen. If your lab is into photo retouching, and minimizing blemishes and scratches, then these two tools will amaze you.

Both tools share the same square of the toolbox, fourth down on the left. The

Healing brush is similar to the clone tool, except that it will match the texture, lighting, and shading of the sampled pixels to the source pixels. This results in very accurate reproduction that makes it the perfect candidate for difficult repair jobs. We tested the new Healing brush against the older clone tool and found that it took longer to perform the same task, but it did a better job.

The Patch tool allows you to drag a selected area over an area to be repaired. Much like the Healing brush, the Patch tool will match texture, lighting, and shading of the sampled pixels to the source pixels. The selection can be feathered from 5–6 pixels for a better blend. We found this tool to be great for removing large amounts of dust particles and scratches, and its speed far surpasses any combination of older Photoshop tools.

For those who use the layers function, the new Photoshop has added an additional five blending modes. They include linear burn, linear dodge, vivid light, linear light and pin light.

In Photoshop 6, vector shapes were added to a single layer, unless you created a new layer for each shape. This slowed the process down, so version 7.0 now creates separate layers for each new shape you add. If you still want all the shapes on one layer, you can have it that way, too.

One feature we have been waiting anxiously for has been a spell checker. All these word processing programs have spoiled us. Well, now we have one in Photoshop 7. Just right click on the text, and it will correct your spelling in English and even several other

languages. This is a big time and cost savings feature, because you no longer have to jump to other programs to check spelling, or redo the job because no one caught the errors.

Among the many new features, we found the Auto Color function in the image adjust pulldown menu. This command looks at the highlights, midtones, and shadows, and then removes any predominate color shift. We found it to work better than the Auto Levels command, and would suggest trying it first on images with both exposure and color shifts.

Wait—There's More!

If you need to create special backgrounds using patterns, Photoshop 7 has a new Pattern Maker. You can load the full image and the selected pattern, test the pattern, adjust the parameters, and then save it as a new pattern file. You have control over size, offset, blending, smoothness and sample detail.

Image Ready 7, which is included with Photoshop 7 also has some improvements in the way it optimizes GIF files for use on the Web. This new optimization method allows you to assign a color in the GIF file as a transparent color. The Web program better handles rollovers and animations by allowing you to see the animation in the editor. Several other Web authoring tools that increase the speed and quality of Web page design have been incorporated in Image Ready 7.

There are dozens of other improvements but we don't have the space to list them all. In fact, we can't even find them all. Just when we think we have, we discover a couple of hidden ones.

Those Adobe folks are pretty tricky. It's obvious that a lot of time and effort when into designing this new version. Their new Healing brush, Patch tool, Brush Engines, File Browser, Tool Presets and Customized Workspace are all designed to make our image editing life easier. Photoshop 7 has made every effort to streamline and speed up the editing process. Since time is money, and a full version upgrade is only $149, making the move to Photoshop 7 should be a nobrainer.

For further information contact Adobe www.adobe.com.

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