

# Adobe Photoshop Album 2.0

New release with many improvements moves Adobe ahead of the pack

Adobe released its second version of Photoshop Album in October 2003, only eight months after shipping the initial version. Overall, version 2.0 is a substantial improvement. The program is easier to use with enhanced capabilities, and some of the version 1.0 annoyances have been eliminated. (For a detailed review of version 1.0, including a comparison against Jasc's Paint Shop Photo Album, see the April/May 2003 issue of *Digital Camera*.)

The look of the user interface has been updated to "Windows XP style", which makes it seem more up-to-date. The overall layout of the Photo Well (the main screen) has changed, with the collapsible Tags panel moved from the left to the right side, and the Properties panel eliminated. Properties of an individual photo now appear in a pop-up window, which is less convenient than the former collapsible panel. The pop-up appears either by selecting Properties on the right-click menu when viewing thumbnails, or by clicking on the Properties button when viewing a full image. A handy slider has been added that allows you to continuously vary the number and size of thumbnails displayed in the Photo Well.

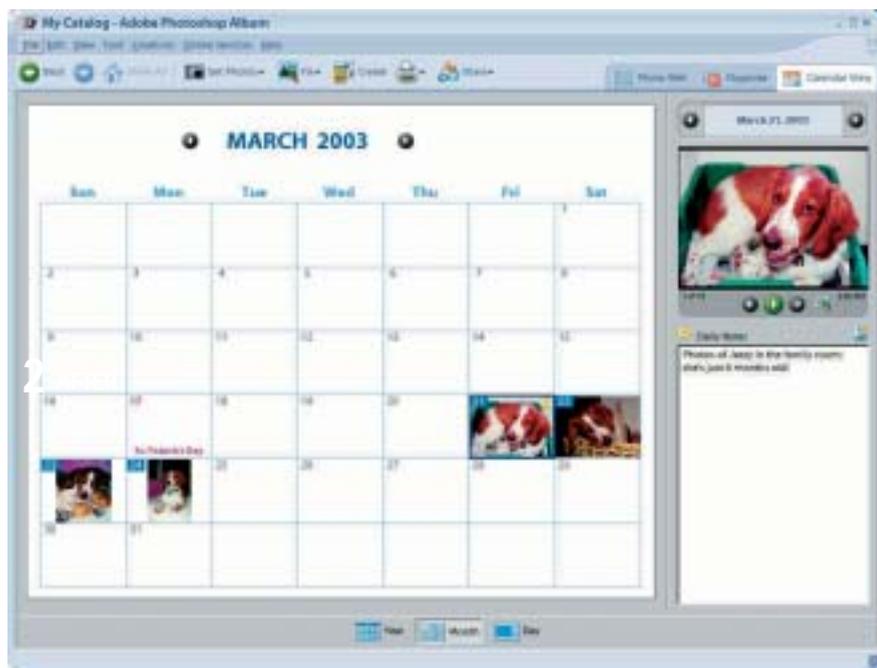
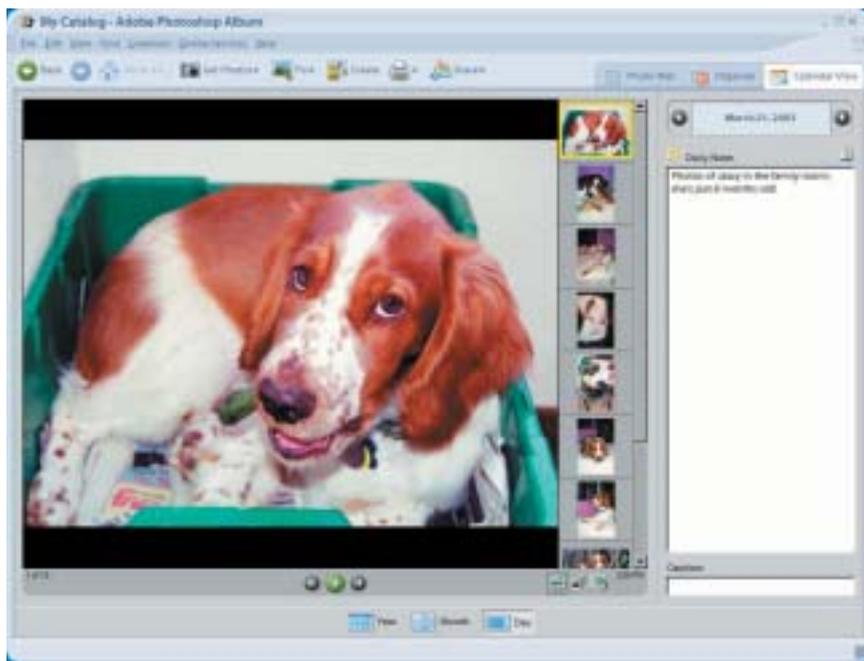
## Significant Changes

The top five improvements in capabilities include a greatly expanded Calendar view, many enhancements in the Fix Photo window, addition of Containers for organizing groups of photos, the ability to modify or add top-level Tags, and support of Palm OS handhelds, mobile phones and TiVo DVRs.

The expansion of Calendar view further extends Adobe's date (rather than folder) orientation. Calendar view, which has become a full-fledged mode like the Photo Well, allows you to zero in on the individual years, months or days when your photos were taken, using a full-screen, desktop-style calendar. Thumbnails appear in each day during which you took photos. You can add notes and named events to any date, and you can run an automatic slideshow of all the photos you took on a selected date.

The enhanced Fix Photo window includes the following changes, among others:

- ✓ The window can be resized so that the Before and After photos can use almost the entire screen, rather than being limited to a fixed, half-screen-size window. This makes fixing photos even easier.
- ✓ The cropping outline is still an animated, dashed line, but it's thinner and dimmer, so it's much less annoying than it was. The portion of the photo outside the outline is now dimmed (like in Jasc), which



makes cropping much easier. When you're cropping a photo in the Fix Photo window, you can use a custom aspect ratio or select one of ten standard aspect ratios, which is very convenient if you're targeting one of the program's preset Creation layouts.

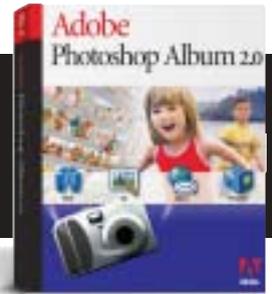
- ✓ Filters for sepia and black & white effects have been added.

- ✓ The sliders for lighting, color and sharpening have been made easier to use; however, there still isn't an "Undo" button to reverse your last change of these three fixes – you have to click the Cancel button and start over.

Collections are containers that allow you to organize a group (a named subset) of photos into a custom order in the Photo Well; this can be useful when

# REVIEW

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you're getting ready to build a Creation. (Normally the Photo Well is limited to displaying photos by date, import batch or folder location.) A Collections tab has been added to the Tags panel on the right side of the screen. Collections can include audio and video clips as well as photos.

You can create your own top-level tag (photo identification) categories and subcategories, as well as delete or modify existing tags. You can automatically tag all photos in a folder with the name of the folder. However, the tag hierarchy still cannot be expanded beyond two levels.

Finally, you can capture photos from your mobile

phone; the program can be set to "watch" a specified folder for new photos arriving from the phone. Photos can now be shared with Palm OS handhelds, photo-enabled mobile phones and TiVo Series 2 digital video recorders (DVRs) with the Home Media Option.

## Other Improvements

A "Find Bar" has been added to the top of the Photo Well. When you drag tags onto the Find Bar, all photos containing those tags are displayed. When you drag a photo onto the Find Bar, all photos containing a similar color distribution are displayed (the degree of match can be set to "best", "close" or "not"). When you drag

a Collection or a Creation onto the Find Bar, all the photos in the Collection or Creation are displayed. The Find Bar is actually a very useful tool.

The Creation Wizard has been redesigned, and



a few additional templates have been added, such as layouts for kids, thank-you and holiday greeting cards, baby announcements, party formats, etc. You can change the portion of a photo that's used in a Creation (e.g., an Album) without cropping the original photo, but you still can't change the positions or aspect ratios of the photos in the preset layouts.

The program's output to Video CD and DVD has been improved so that it's closer to Jasc's, except that it still doesn't support VCD menus. Creation of web galleries has been expanded from 7 to 11 layouts, but they're still very weak.

## Summary

As of this writing, Jasc has not announced an update to Paint Shop Photo Album 4.0; this release of Photoshop Album 2.0 puts Adobe even further ahead of Jasc. If you take digital photos and you don't own either of these programs, it's definitely worth buying one of them. If you already own Photoshop Album 1.0, enough improvements have been made so that it's worth considering updating to version 2.0. To encourage upgrades, Adobe offered a \$15 upgrade rebate off Album's \$50 cost to owners of version 1.0 or any competitive program.

However, be aware that Adobe Photoshop Album 2.0 still contains a number of annoyances (some of which have been detailed in this review), so it's not a total slam-dunk.

[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

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