

Adobe Photoshop Album 2.0 — Review

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O K, so you finally broke down and bought a digital camera and you've been taking pictures of everyone in sight. Now that you have all those pictures stored in your computer, what are you going to do with them? Before digital you would take your film to get it developed; then you would paste those photos into an album or throw them in a box and forget about them. Digital photography affords you the opportunity to do so much more with your photos than you could ever do with film.



Rating - ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Adobe Photoshop Album 2.0. is a low cost (\$50.00) software package that allows the amateur to manage those photos and do something creative with them.

Album 2.0 is a big improvement over version 1.0 which was notorious for crashing a system. I found Album 2.0 to be one of the easiest photo organizers I have tested to date. The program opens with a "Quick Guide" that will lead you through the six primary functions of the software. Once you are familiar with the program you can bypass the Quick Guide if you like. The six primary functions of the program are:

1. Get Photos
2. Organize Photos
3. Find Photos
4. Fix Photos
5. Share Photos
6. Create albums, slideshows, calendars, greeting cards, etc.

Lets take a quick look at each these separately.



Getting Photos — You can read your photos into Album six different ways:

1) Do a search of a hard drive, 2) read from a camera or card reader, 3) scan them in, 4) read them from a specific folder, 5) read them from a CD, or 6) import them from a mobile phone. The import from a mobile phone is misleading because in order to get photos from the phone you must first download them into your computer. So in effect you are actually using method 4. Album 2.0 supports the JPG, TIF, BMP PNG, GIF, PSD, PDF, PDD, and Camera Raw image file formats.

When read, the photos are displayed in a "Photo Well" from where they can be organized. The photos in the Photo Well can be sorted in one of four ways: by oldest first, by newest first, by folder location, or by import batch. The newest/oldest sorts use the date created by your digital camera. A drawback is that you cannot rearrange photos in any other sequence by dragging and dropping. To change the sequence of the photos into any other order than the four above, you need to modify the file names or creation dates.

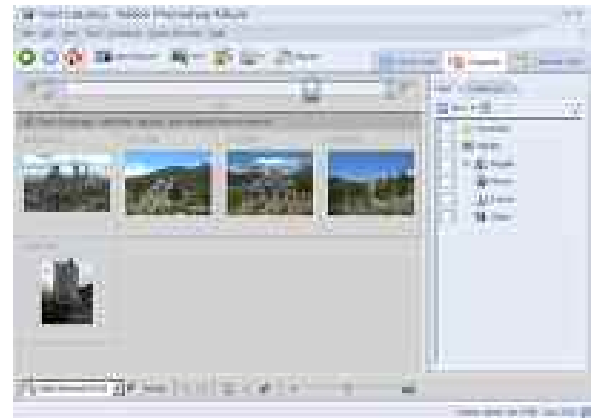
Your photos can be displayed in three different ways: 1) Photo Well View, in which photos fill the window; 2) Organize View, in which the photo well is displayed along with the Collections and Tags panels; 3) Calendar View, in which thumbnails are shown on a calendar page in the main window, with larger views shown in a side window pane. The three views are well thought out and easy to work with.

Organize Photos — Album 2.0 utilizes three organization methods. At the highest level is the "Catalog." When you read your photos into Album 2.0 by default they are placed in a "Catalog" called My

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Catalog. You can create additional catalogs if the need exists. For example, you may have a catalog for business photos and one for personal photos.

Within a catalog you can organize your photos into “Collections.” A Collection, for example, can be a set of photos of your pets. Just create a new Collection called “Our Pets” and drag a thumbnail of each pet photo from the Photo Well to the Our Pets Collection. You can then use the Collection when you use the Find or Create features. To Find a Collection you simply click a search checkbox next to the Collection name and only the photos within that Collection will be displayed in the Photo Well. If you want to create a calendar or a slideshow or other creation that contains your pets’ photos, you just select the “Our Pets” Collection as you step through the Calendar Creation Wizard.



To further organize your photos you can “Tag” individual photos. Tags represent descriptive keywords to identify the photo. For example, if you have a cat, a dog, and a bird within the “Our Pets” Collection you can create Tags for each. Then when searching for photos of only one of the pets, you simply click the search checkbox for that Tag and only those photos are displayed. There are six predefined Tag Categories but you can create your own Categories, Sub-categories, and Tags. Photos can be in multiple Collections and can have multiple Tags.

You can display and modify the properties of each photo. Properties tell you the name of the photo, its size, when it was taken, what type of camera was used, where it was imported from, and if there are any collections or tags associated with it. You can add text notes to your photo properties and also a text and/or audio caption.

Find Photos — Finding photos is easy in Album 2.0. As mentioned earlier you can use Tags and Collections to find photos, but if you want to be more specific you have a lot of choices, 21 to be exact. You can search by date range by entering a range or by using a timeline slider bar. You can search by unknown date, by caption or note, by filename, by history (eleven different ways), by media type (five different ways), by untagged items, and even by color similarity. If you can’t find it in Album 2.0, it just isn’t there.

Fix Photos — Album 2.0 is not an image editor and doesn’t pretend to be. Its strengths are in organizing, searching and creating different types of output. It does provide some basic functions that allow you to correct common problems. An “Auto Fix” function allows you to correct one or more photos automatically. If you don’t like the results you can open a dialog box and tinker with the lighting, color and sharpness attributes yourself. You can also rotate and crop photos. Two filters are included that allow you to convert to black and white or sepia tone. A red-eye removal tool is also included, and it works very well. If you need more than these basic correction functions, you can one-click over to Adobe Elements or Adobe Photoshop to do your editing and then return to Album. If you don’t have either of those programs you can use the default editor which is the MS Photo Editor, or you can define your own image editor.

Sharing — You can link to several online services to have your photos or creations processed for a fee.

Creations — Here’s where you get to put your photos into viewable form for everyone to see. You have nine creation options to choose from;

- **Album** – This allows you to print your photos in several different album formats. You can add text captions

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and headers and footers, but the font size is very small and cannot be edited.

- **Slideshow** — Probably the best of the Creation options. Slideshow affords you the most control over how your photos will be displayed with a good selection of templates. Several background music selections are provided or you can use your own. Both audio and text captions can be included although the text captions are so small as to be barely visible, and they cannot be changed. Slideshows are meant to be displayed on a computer and as such can be used with a projector. Slideshow is a good way to archive your photos, but be aware that it changes the file names to a sequential numbering system.
- **Video CD** — Is basically a slideshow that can be played on a Video CD compatible DVD player. A nice way to show your photos on your television set. Music, audio captions and transitions are *not* supported. The only captions allowed are the tiny text



captions. Your original photos need to be high resolution in order to get high quality TV playback.

- **Greeting Card** — Several templates are provided but are all limited to a four-fold type card. Message and greeting text fonts are larger here but still cannot be changed.
- **E-Card** — An online greeting card is created as a PDF format attachment. The templates are the same as the Greeting Card and you can include music and audio captions. The recipient must have the Adobe Acrobat Reader to view the card which is displayed in full screen. The recipient also gets a sales pitch for the Album 2.0 Starter program.
- **Calendar** — A very nice feature that allows you to create photo calendars with a variety of templates.
- **Photo Book** — Provides a variety of templates to

allow you to create a photo album that you can send to an online service to be bound and printed.

If you have your own website the following two Creation features provide an excellent way to share your photos on the net.

- **Web Photo Gallery** — Allows you to create a photo gallery that you can post on a web site for others to view. Easy to use with a variety of background styles to choose from.
- **Atmosphere 3-D Gallery** — Hang your photos on the wall of a 3-D art museum and have your visitors walk through each room as they view your gallery. This feature still has quite a few glitches to be worked out. It crashed the program several times.

When you are satisfied with your creation you have the following output options available to you: Save as a PDF file, Print it, E-mail it, Burn it to CD, or Send it to an online service.

Conclusion: All in all, Adobe Photo Album 2.0 is an easy, low cost way for the home user to get their digital photos from camera to creation with a minimal learning curve. Once you've mastered it you may wish it had more bells and whistles, but they may come in the next version.

Pros: Easy to learn and use, the Quick Guide Interface makes it easy for novices to get started. Strong organization and search features. Photo Fixing sufficient for most lighting and color problems. Maintains original photos. Several useful and fun Creation features.

Cons: No drag and drop capability to rearrange photos in the Photo Well. A lack of font editing capabilities in Creations. File names are changed when burned to CD making them difficult to locate when viewing CD contents. Atmosphere 3-D Gallery sporadically crashes the program.

System Requirements: Pentium III or higher,
Windows ME, 2000, or XP, (Win98 not supported)
128MB RAM (256 recommended),
250MB available hard disk space,
Adobe Reader 6.0 and MS DirectX 9.0 (These are included on the CD if you don't already have them. An additional 175MB HD space may be needed to install.),
MS Internet Explorer 5.5+,
Color monitor at 800x600, and a CD ROM drive.