



## Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2

Corel Corporation

\$99.99 CAD

(but cheaper with your CAPA membership)

I'm old school Photoshop. I've been using Photoshop (PS) since I acquired my first scanner and computer back in 1998. As a matter of fact, I still think I have v5.0 kicking around somewhere. I'll look... I also used earlier versions of Paint Shop Pro (Ps), starting with v7 but when compared side by side, and perhaps since I had PS, I really didn't see the need for 2 editing programs. Nothing against Paint Shop, however; for its cost it was a righteous contender and a fine program with a wide and varied feature set, but as I said, I was old school. That's why I looked forward to reviewing the latest version, Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 (PsX2) with relish. I was anxious to see just how far the product had come, and the improvements made with its acquisition by Corel. The product did not disappoint.

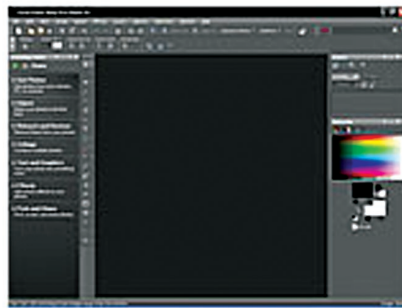
To say the least, I was very pleased. Anything I wanted or used to do in PS, I was easily able to accomplish with PsX2. My workflow method was easily adaptable, the controls and desktop layout were intuitive and workable, and overall I found the product easy to use right after the install. Minimum install requirements are as follows:

- Windows Vista or Windows XP
- 1GHz processor
- 256MB of RAM for XP, 768MB for Vista
- 500MB of free hard disk space
- Microsoft DirectX 9.0c or higher (already included with a standard installation of Windows)
- Internet Explorer 6 or higher
- 1078 x 768 resolution display, 24-bit color

But I think we all know that to really run any image manipulation application you'll need at least a 2GHz processor and 1 gig of RAM. I have a 5-year old 2.4 GHz machine with 2 gigs of RAM, a 512 Meg video card, and LOTS of hard disk space. PsX2 ran quite smoothly.

I was impressed with the vast array of tools available. There are too many to list them all, but here are a few of my favourites:

- Visible watermarks. I know I'll be using this to brand my photos prior to publishing on the Web.
- Improved Black and White Conversion. Instead of being stuck with a formulaic B&W conversion, this tool allows the user to fine tune by simulating the full gamut of colour filters and contrast correction.



New Workspace Themes



Visible Watermarks

- HDR Photomerge. As with PS, this is a very useful and cool tool once you get over the learning curve. You can produce some very intense images.
- Express Lab. This is a quick and simple interface to immediately edit images. All the basic editing tools are available (brightness, saturation, crop, red-eye etc).
- Perspective fix. Ideal for those who, like myself, like to shoot wide. PsX2's corrections were accurate almost all of the time. I had only a couple of images that didn't look right.
- Depth of Field Control. Like the PS filter, this one does a pretty good job of adding DOF to photos that would benefit from it. You have to be careful though, as it can be easily overdone.



Layer Styles

- Most of the popular and purchased PS plug-ins will work with PsX2. Check with the creator or vendor for confirmation. Actions and scripts are not transferable.

RAW file support is adequate. While most file types are supported, camera support is limited to a list of camera models and can be found on the Corel support web. For some reason I was unable to open images from my Canon 20D, though it is on the list. Then again, I've had similar issues with Adobe's Lightroom and my 20D, so perhaps there is a glitch in my system.

Overall, I feel this product has come a long way from being a poor man's Photoshop. The price is more than right, especially with the CAPA discount. Its rich and varied features make it fun and easy to work with. It contains a learning module for the novice that I found helpful, and finally it has a few tools you won't find in PS, but I'll leave you to discover those on your own.

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