

Chapter 1

What's New in Illustrator CS3?

It's always exciting to see what's new in new versions of your favorite software. Longtime Adobe Illustrator fans certainly have a great interest in learning about the new features in Illustrator CS3, but those changes aren't of interest only to people who've used Illustrator extensively in the past. New users and people who currently use competing products also want to know if this new version adds must-have features.

In this chapter, I introduce several features that have been added to Illustrator CS3 as well as some changes that make existing features easier to use or simply more powerful. Fortunately, Illustrator CS3 maintains a strong connection with the past so that you don't have to relearn the entire application. Still, many of the changes that have been made are important ones that you'll find useful and fun. Let's dig in!

The New User Interface

The most powerful and useful change to Illustrator CS3 isn't some snazzy new tool, but instead the evolution of the Illustrator interface. All Adobe's "original" CS3 products (InDesign, Photoshop) now share a new, consistent interface that builds upon and improves the classic palette-driven UI (user interface) of the last ten years.

If you're upgrading from a previous version of Illustrator, the changes are probably a slight bit startling, especially the new single-column tool palette that runs along the left side of the screen. And if you're totally resistant to change, you can turn everything back to "the way it was in the good old days," but you'll be crippling yourself as a result. The new UI provides more

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working space, easier and faster access to the tools you use every day, and a more efficient workflow to Illustrator than ever before. Figure 1.1 shows the interface of Illustrator CS2 next to the Illustrator CS3 UI. Note that they don't look all that dramatically different. Instead, the real difference is how you interact with those elements on the screen, and how much smarter they behave in Illustrator CS3.

The main conceptual change to Illustrator CS3's UI is the concept of panels. Instead of a series of floating palettes as in previous versions, panels all reside on the same plane, and increasing the size of one panel decreases the size of another. Think of panels as a big rectangle (your screen) divided into a series of smaller rectangles, as shown in Figure 1.2. As you increase the size of one rectangle, other rectangles are reduced in size as a result.

FIGURE 1.1

The lower-left screen is the CS3 screen. The upper right is the CS2 Screen. While the differences are not visually significant, how the UI works is quite different.

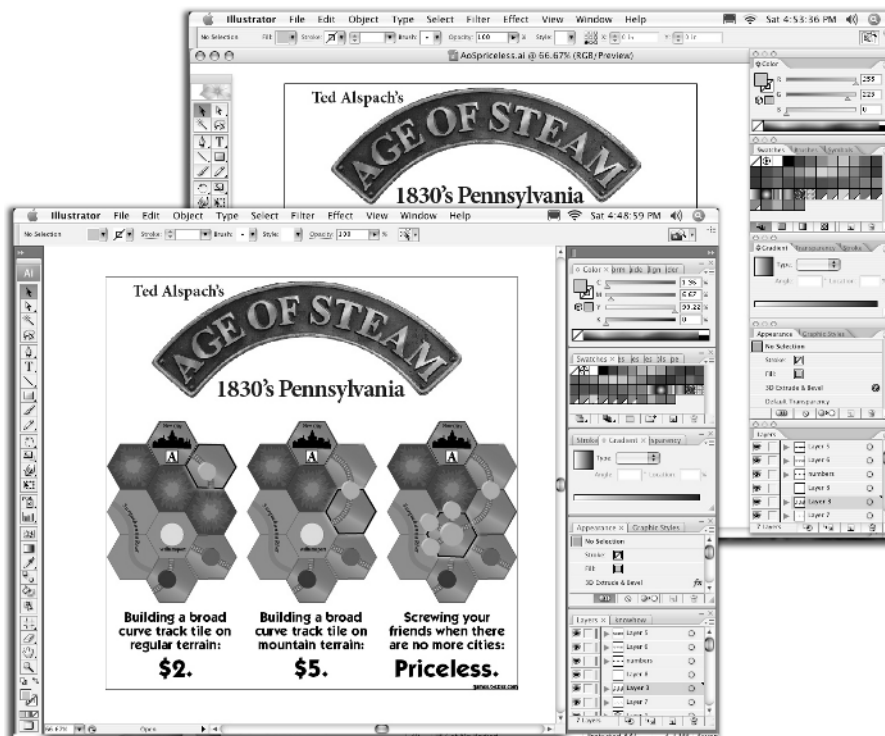
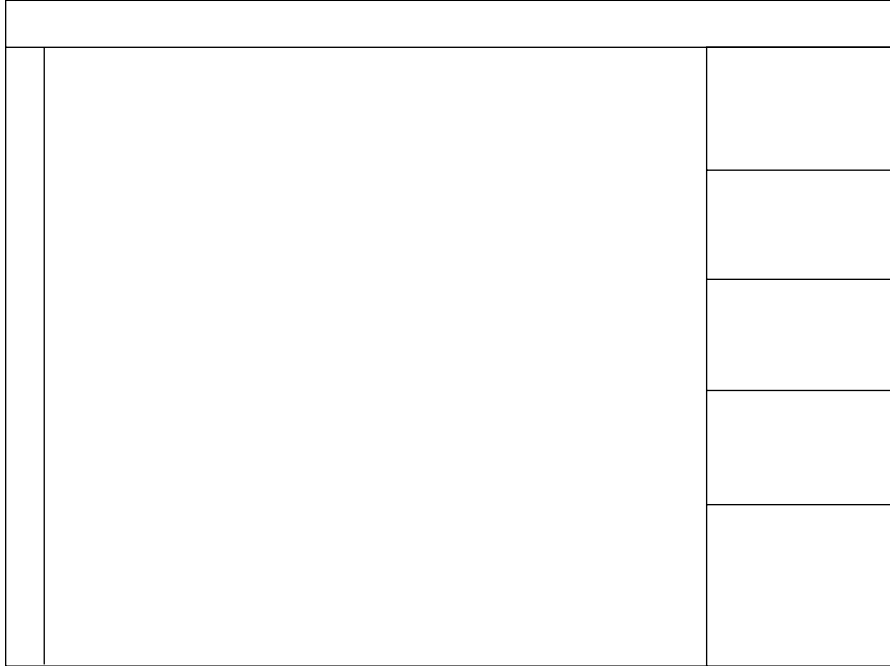


FIGURE 1.2

The Illustrator screen is now divided into a series of rectangles.



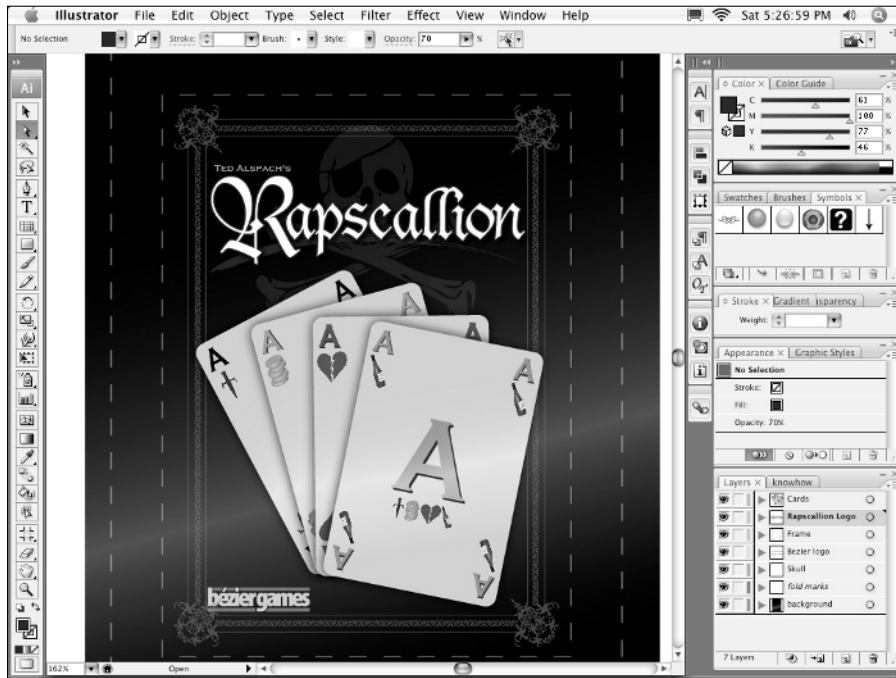
The end result is working with Illustrator's palettes...excuse me, "panels," is incredibly easier and less time consuming. As you resize a panel, other panels are automatically resized. Previously, a great deal of time was spent moving palettes around the screen and hunting for ones that had been covered up by ones you just moved. Not only that, but there was a big chunk of dead space below the tool palette. These issues are totally resolved in Illustrator CS3, enhancing your productivity. And because most things are essentially in the same place, there's very little learning curve to deal with in order to take advantage of the new UI.

CROSS-REF For a complete discussion of the Illustrator interface, see Chapter 2.

Along with the new panel setup, each of the individual panels can be reduced to a small icon, to take up even less space on your screen. This is the place where you want to set those panels that you use less frequently than the always-displayed ones (like Appearance, for example, which should always be displayed). Figure 1.3 shows my personal Illustrator UI setup, which includes a row of icon-sized panels that I often use.

FIGURE 1.3

My own personal workspace has a column of icons to the left of the palette column.



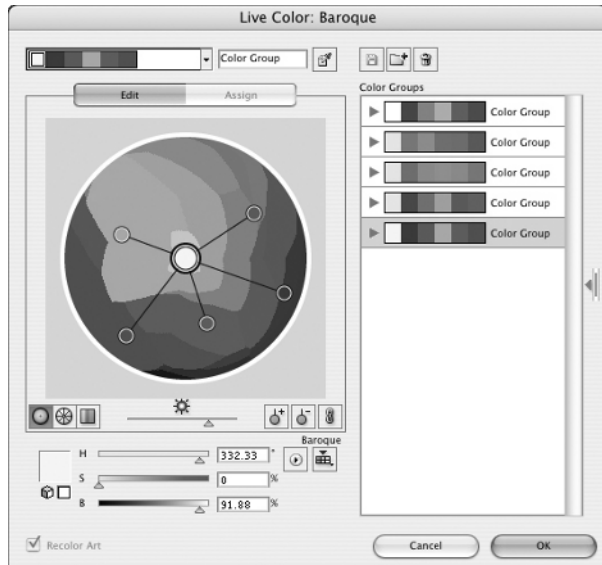
The ability to save your layout has been enhanced in Illustrator CS3 as well. Choosing Window ⇨ Workspaces ⇨ Save Workspace results in a new entry in the Workspace submenu that lists each of the workspaces you've saved.

How Live Color Provides Options You Never Dreamed Of

Many enhancements have been made to Illustrator's color management and creation tools, but most significant of those is a group of features Adobe calls Live Color. Live Color provides a way to automatically generate and save color harmonies, which are sets of colors that are related to each other in some way. Figure 1.4 shows the new Live Color interface, which is used to generate and modify these color sets.

FIGURE 1.4

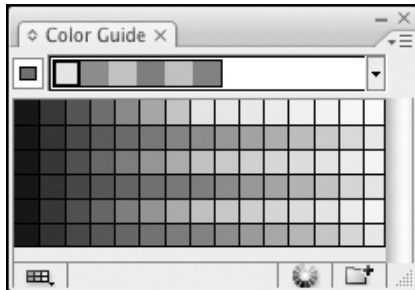
The new Live Color dialog box provides new, unique methods for generating related color sets.



The new Color Guide palette (shown in Figure 1.5) is something I find even more useful. It takes color sets and provides a swatch ramp for those colors, making consistent color usage easier than ever before. Clicking the round icon along the bottom right of the palette takes you to the Live Color dialog box.

FIGURE 1.5

The new Color Guide palette



CROSS-REF

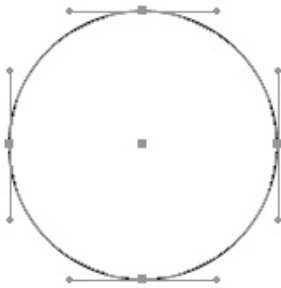
For a complete discussion of Illustrator's color functionality, see Chapter 7.

New Anchor Point Functionality

It's often the little things that get me really excited about each new release of Illustrator, and the biggest little thing in Illustrator CS3 is the improved tools for dealing with anchor points. New preferences allow for easier selection of points and paths (much more intuitively than ever before), larger anchor point display, alignment of anchor points in a more intuitive fashion via the Alignment palette, and the ability to display all the control handles on a selected path, as shown in Figure 1.6.

FIGURE 1.6

Selecting this ellipse shows all the control handles and control handle lines on the path.



Speed, Quickness, and Fastocity

This can't be overstated enough: Illustrator CS3 is faster. If you were on the fence about upgrading your Creative Suite 2 to CS3, do it just because of the Illustrator speed increase (there are a ton of other good reasons, but this should be at the top of your list).

And if you use a Mac, and haven't moved to a Mac with an Intel processor, now is the time to do that as well. The speed increase is substantial.

Flash Integration

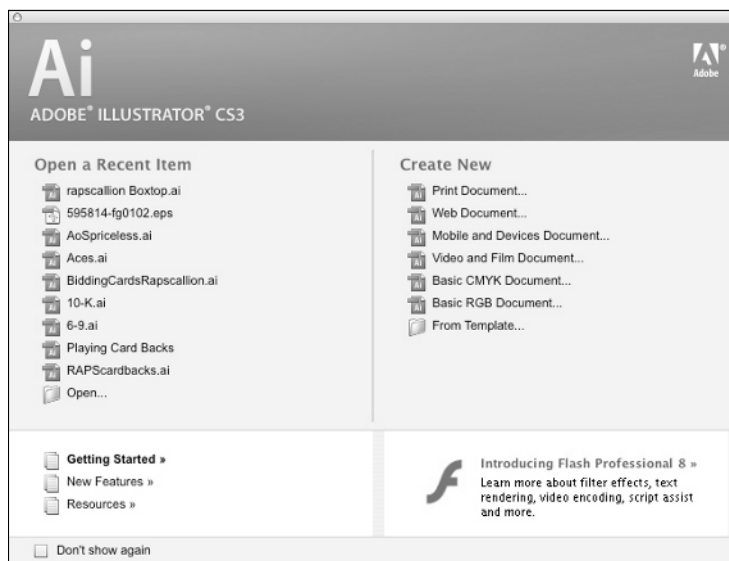
Illustrator CS3 works better than ever with Adobe Flash (which is part of the Creative Suite now). Most notable is the fact that Illustrator symbols now map correctly to Flash symbols. But the biggest Flash feature for Illustrator users isn't in Illustrator at all; it's in Flash. Flash CS3 now accepts Illustrator CS3 files directly.

New Welcome Screen

Illustrator provides a handy “Welcome Screen” whenever you don't have a document open that lists the last ten recent files that you've used and also provides a quick way to jump into a new document by clicking one of the preset profiles for print, Web, and so on. You can even Option-click (Alt+click) on them to avoid the New dialog box and get right into using Illustrator. Figure 1.7 shows the new Welcome Screen.

FIGURE 1.7

The new semipersistent Welcome Screen provides quick access to recent files and new ones.

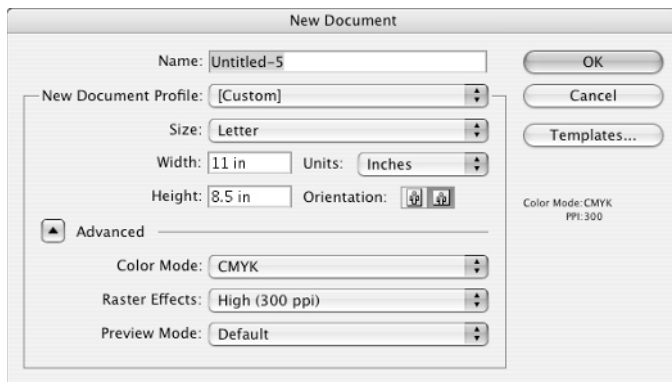


Document Profiles

Illustrator contains several preset document profiles, accessible from both the Welcome Screen and the New Document dialog box. Each of the profiles contains preset info on document size, color space, raster effect resolution, and measurement unit type. Figure 1.8 shows the new New Document dialog box, with the Custom preset chosen.

FIGURE 1.8

The New Document dialog box provides options for setting up new documents.

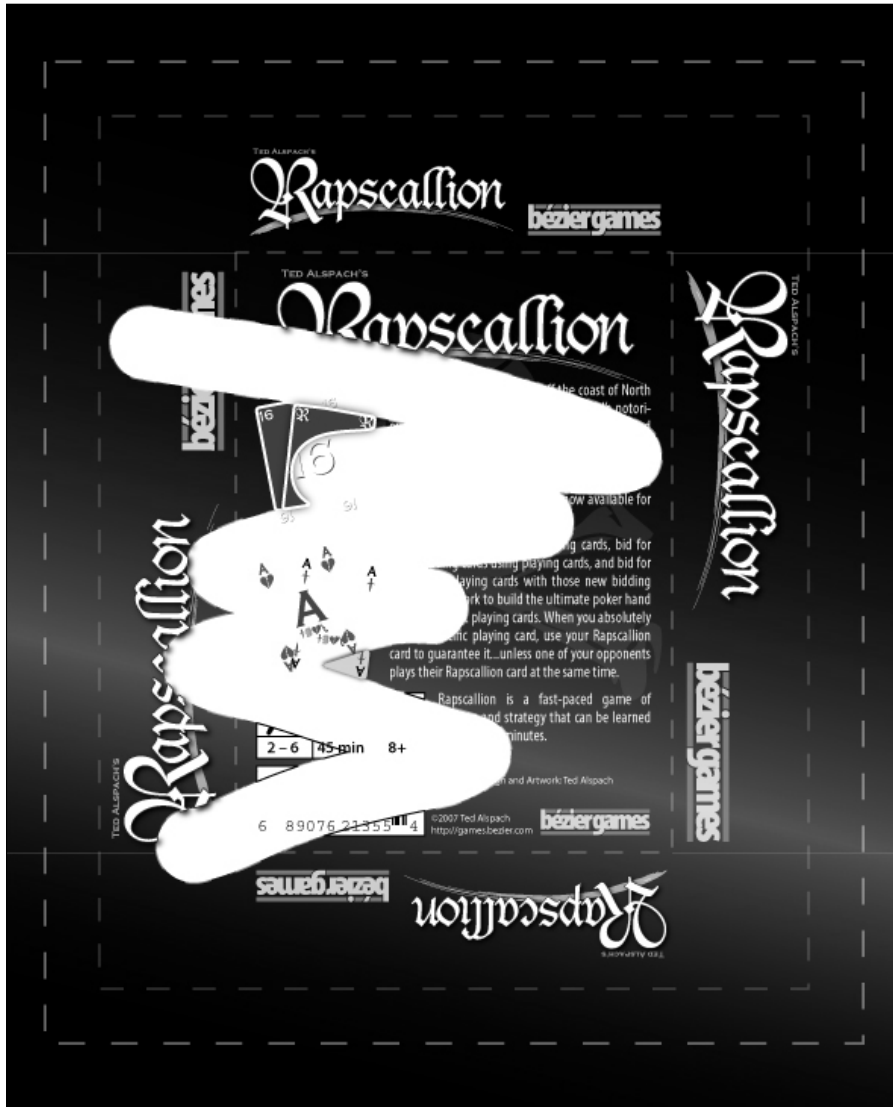


The New and Improved Eraser Tool

The new Illustrator CS3 Eraser tool works in a similar fashion to the Photoshop Eraser tool now. Before, using the tool was a laborious process of dragging along a path. Now, scrubbing across your document with the Eraser tool removes huge chunks of your illustration. However, it still doesn't work on text or placed images. Figure 1.9 shows artwork that has been partially erased using the new Eraser tool.

FIGURE 1.9

The Eraser tool has cut out a swath of artwork from the original box bottom, but it left text and images alone.



Device N Printing

Illustrator now supports Photoshop multitone images and allows you to apply raster-based effects on top of spot color artwork. Unfortunately, Adobe wasn't able to add support for true "Mixed inks" at this time.

Crop Area Tool

Illustrator's new Crop Area tool lets you set the crop area (the area read by printers and other applications to determine where the edges of your illustration lie) by clicking and dragging.

Summary

Illustrator CS3 has some major changes and several minor ones compared to earlier versions of the application. This chapter introduced several of the new features in order to give you a bit of the flavor of the new version. You learned that:

- The new Illustrator CS3 user interface doesn't look significantly different than the CS2 interface, but it behaves differently...and better.
- The new panel-based interface design prevents palettes from overlapping each other and your work area.
- The new single-column tool palette frees up additional space for working on documents.
- Live Color provides tools for creating and managing sets of colors.
- The new Color Guide palette shows stepped sets of colors in a similar fashion to the Swatch palette.
- The new anchor point options make working with both anchor points and control handles easier.
- The dramatic increase in speed will make you more productive with Illustrator CS3 than any previous version.
- New Adobe Flash integration includes better symbols and the ability for Flash CS3 to read native Illustrator CS3 files.
- The new persistent Welcome Screen shows a list of the most recent documents opened and provides quick access to creating new files from document preset profiles.

- New document profiles quickly set up new documents with sizing, color, and other information.
- The new Eraser tool quickly removes artwork from an illustration in a similar fashion to the way Photoshop's Eraser tool works.
- New Device N printing support allows for the placement of Photoshop multitone images.
- The new Crop Area tool lets you interactively control the size of your document's edges when you print or import your Illustrator artwork into another application.

