

# The Lightroom Manifesto: Adobe has lost its way

In [News](#) by Jim Harmer /

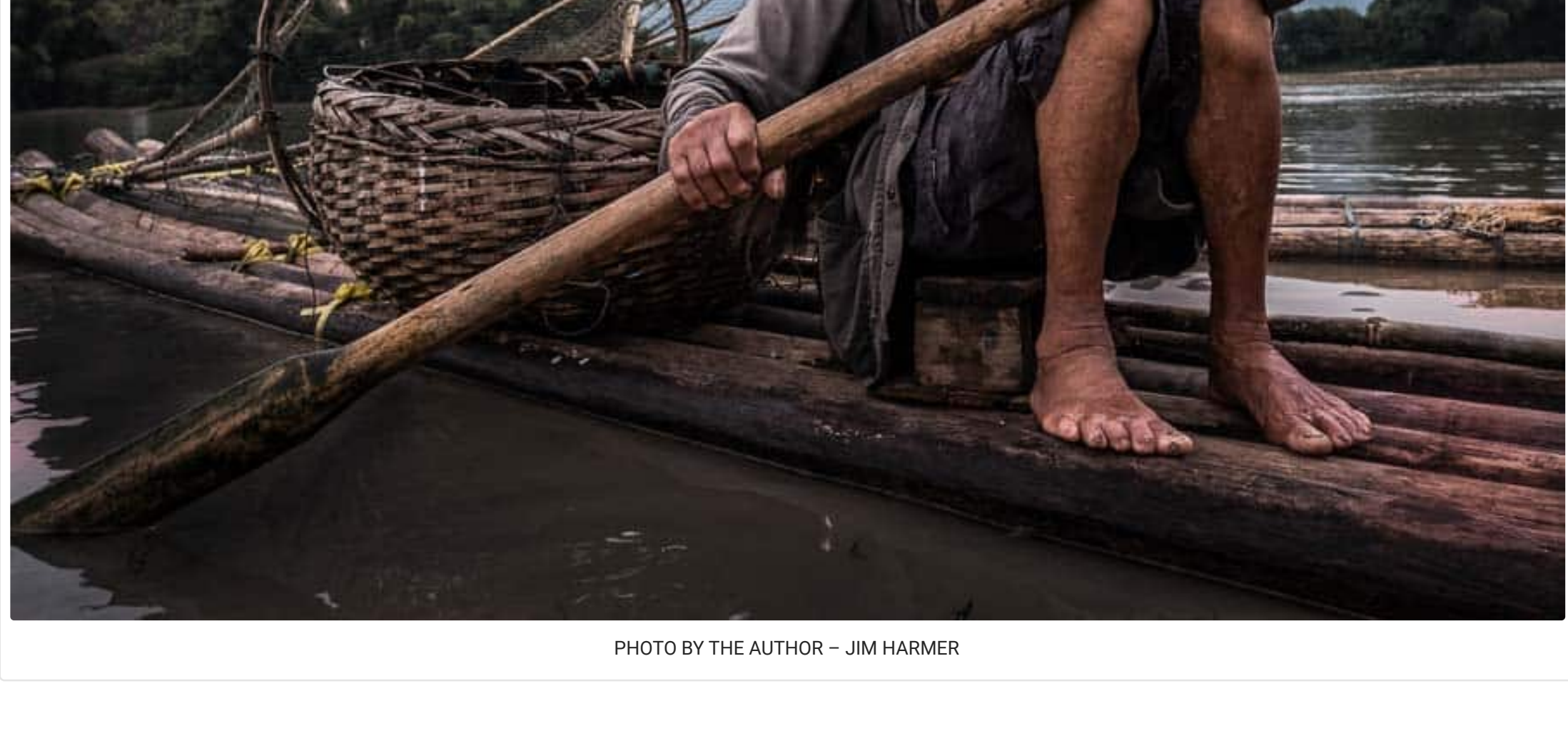
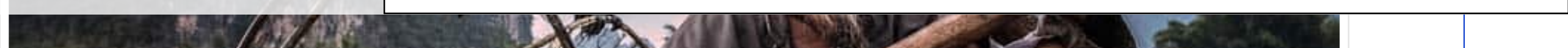
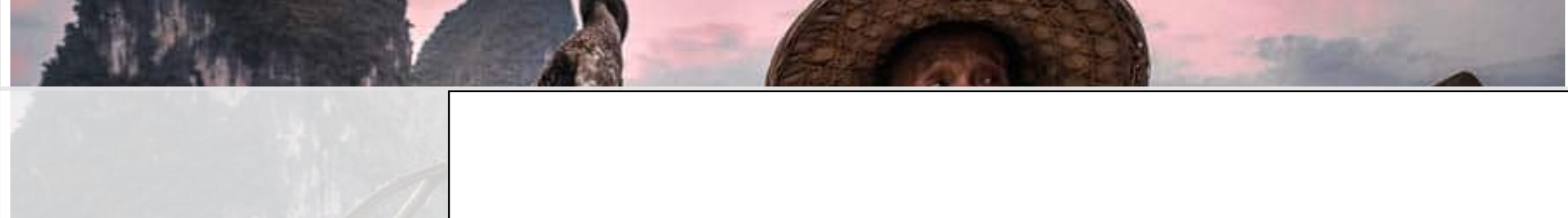
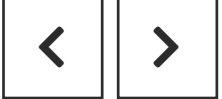


PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR - JIM HARMER

I'm not happy with what I'm writing. I don't like calling people out and spreading negativity on the web. However, I feel passionate about [Lightroom](#) and I believe it's being mishandled. I'll keep my tone in this piece as positive as I can, and rather than just complaining, I will suggest an easy change [Adobe](#) could make to better serve photographers.

Yesterday, Tom Hogarty admitted that [Lightroom](#) performance is subpar and posted a user survey asking what we're experiencing. Tom seems like a good guy and I appreciate his attention to users yesterday.

But honestly, my first thought after seeing the survey was, "Wait... You can't be telling me that [Adobe](#) is only now realizing that Lightroom performance is unbearably slow... right!?!?! It's been like this for over three years!"

Adobe has made VERY few updates to Lightroom (computer version) in the last two years. The pace of innovation has been so slow that I felt certain they were working behind the scenes on a complete re-write of the program to vastly improve the speed and put it on par with programs like Capture One or Photo Mechanic (for culling). After yesterday's poll, it seems apparent that they are just now seeing that there is an issue in the first place.

## LR Has Seen Few Feature Updates in 2 Years

The following is a full and complete list of features added to Lightroom in the last two years. This excludes updates for minor bug fixes, new lens and camera support, and is only for the computer version (non-mobile).

- December 6, 2016 – "Reference View" added. It makes it easier to compare two photos side-by-side. Also, you can now export a collection set as a catalog, and create smart collections with images that have snapshots.
- June 8, 2016 – "Guided Upright" added. It provides another way to straighten lines. Pending Sync section shows sync status of photos. Smart previews can now be merged to HDR or Panorama.
- January 27, 2016 – "Boundary Warp" added. It just warps stitched panos to fill empty spaces.
- October 9, 2016 – The import process was changed and the update was badly bungled. Functionality was removed and an annoying bug was introduced. Tom Hogarty apologized for how the update was handled and the old import was restored. Props to Adobe for listening, but the net experience was just the same old Lightroom as before.
- October 5, 2015 – Dehaze can now be applied with an adjustment brush.

That's it. Two years later, we have another option for stitching a pano, another way to straighten lines in photos, and a way to compare two photos on the screen. Everything else was just bug fixes and camera/lens support updates. This pace of innovation simply does not warrant paying monthly for a subscription.

## Import and Culling In LR Is Unbearably Slow

The develop module in Lightroom works reasonably quick. On my machine (an iMac 5k which was fully specced out at the time of ordering), it takes several seconds for a photo to completely load when browsing through images in the culling process.

Again, this is NOT just me. I hear on at least a weekly basis from readers of Improve Photography that working in Lightroom is just too slow.

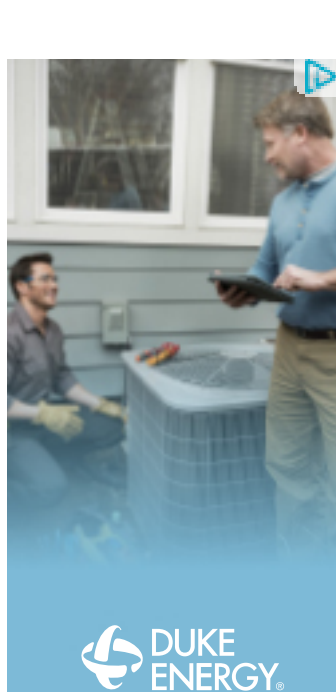
Obviously, the performance depends on your specific machine. Lightroom is much faster on my iMac than my Mac Air. However, if there are any photographers who haven't noticed the unbearably slow performance of Lightroom, PLEASE go download a free trial of Capture 1 or Photo Mechanic. It's like editing in warp speed.

I recently stopped using Adobe Premiere for video editing after being an almost daily user of Adobe Premier for many years. I switched to Apple's Final Cut, and now I can edit a video in HALF the time it took me to do so in Premier. The speed difference is unbelievable.

Almost two years ago I posted a video showing the import speed of Lightroom compared to the competition. The test showed that Lightroom's import was 600% slower than the next worse alternative. Adobe saw the video and reached out to me, but their response was mostly "There has to be some kind of bug. Tell me about your system." That was frustrating. It wasn't just me and anyone using the program could see that instantly. I heard from hundreds of other photographers who were all seeing the same thing.

## So Where Has Adobe Been for the Last Two Years?

Adobe seems to have a much greater focus on Lightroom Mobile than on Lightroom for the desktop—despite the fact that no one could argue that Lightroom for the desktop is vastly more important to passionate photographers today.



Adobe has also put attention toward silly side-projects like "Lightroom for the Apple TV," which was released in July 2016.

Adobe bought Fotolia in late 2014. Many updates in Adobe products (not Lightroom specifically) seem to be focusing on integrating that stock photo portfolio into Adobe software programs—so they can sell our life's work for a couple dimes a piece. Forgive me for not being overly excited.

## The Lightroom Manifesto: How Adobe Can Fix This

- Stop all silly side projects. No more "Lightroom for Apple TV" or spending time making very minor features like "Reference View." That's not what we're asking for.
- Buy a company—Camera Bits Inc. That's the company that makes Photo Mechanic. Photo Mechanic has created what photographers are asking for. Buy the company, learn how they are doing what they are doing, and then implement it into Lightroom as a culling module. Jeff Harmon has been calling for a culling module for ages, and I think he's right. The speed of the develop module is fine. Import and culling IS the issue.
- Adobe is constantly with its users. It has a Lightroom blog, evangelists, a conference, social media, etc. However, somehow the real pain points of photographers are getting lost. The situation with Lightroom performance has been urgent for over 3 years, and they seem to only now be focusing on it.
- I'm okay with paying for a subscription to Adobe products. I currently have two \$50/month subscriptions. I'll pay for professional tools. However, the pace of innovation on Lightroom has fallen far below expectations. 2018 is coming up, and the current version is still Lightroom 2015. Looking at the list of added features in the last two years does NOT make me excited about giving up another \$100 next month.
- Give the Lightroom team the resources they need to succeed. Every interaction I've had with the people Adobe has been positive and impressive. The Lightroom team does seem to be passionate about the product. This leads me to believe that they simply aren't getting the resources they need to make Lightroom what it can be.

## The Future

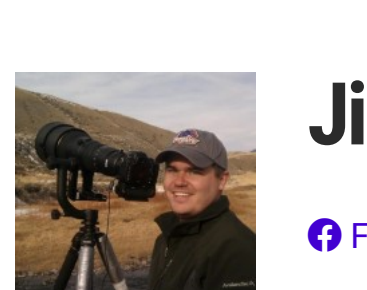
I'm personally giving Adobe until the Spring to fix Lightroom performance or I'm going to be canceling my subscription and embracing the alternative photo editing programs which are improving at a tremendous rate. It would be difficult for me to imagine doing photography without [Photoshop](#) and Lightroom, but the status quo is not working.



Also, the feature set in Lightroom has slowed to a crawl ever since Adobe locked us into a subscription. They swore up and down that the subscription model would allow them to make better improvements to products and consistently develop them over time. That is simply not factual. The list of significant features added to Lightroom in the last two entire years is barely one sentence long.

Adobe is a great company and the only reason I'm writing this is because I'm passionate about their products. Unfortunately, after seeing what Adobe has done with Lightroom over the last two years, it seems clear that they are not passionate about me—their customer—any more.

[Link Disclosures](#)



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Jim Harmer is the founder of Improve Photography, and host of the popular Improve Photography Podcast. More than a million photographers follow him on social media, and he has been listed at #35 in rankings of the most popular photographers in the world. [He blogs about how to start an internet business on IncomeSchool.com.](#)

