

Book review

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Photoshop CS3 For Photographers with Chris Orwig

This publication appears to have a great potential to help get us started with Photoshop CS3 as it is a video training book - it has 50 short video tutorials, each demonstrating a lesson to help improve our use of Photoshop. Accompanying the DVD is a book of exercises which instruct us in how to replicate the associated video lesson - and all the required initial images are provided on the DVD. So instead of a book that you can just read, here you can watch, and then do - a very much improved learning environment.

With all this in mind, I sat down, loaded the provided browser page that would initiate the video clips, and clicked to start the first video.

The 50 videos are grouped into 13 topics, introducing you to:

Photoshop palettes - the interface

Digital images, image sizes, cropping, etc.;

Bridge; the image management and selection program;

Camera Raw - but for much more than just raw images;

Layers;

Masking;

Selections;

Levels;

Curves;

Burning & Dodging;

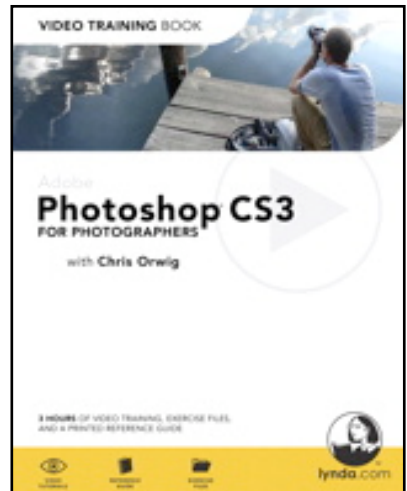
Black & White conversion;

Image Cleanup; and

Retouching Essentials.

The back cover of the package describes Chris Orwig as a visual artist; a professional photographer, interactive designer, author and speaker. His passion is evident from the video tutorials, but the placement of his enthusiasm could be improved with a little more scripting of the demonstrations.

The initial groups of tutorials introduce us to the various areas of tools that are available in Photoshop, and the written lessons enable us to actually do the same activity to reinforce the learning process. The final groups of tutorials move on to show how we can combine the use of these tools to accomplish particular tasks commonly required to improve our photos.



Unfortunately, Chris' presentation is unable to mask some rather significant deficiencies in the tutorials.

The first problem that is evident in the majority of the tutorials is a technical detail - the video is rather slow to refresh the screen image, and the verbal presentation is not reflected in what can be seen. This does not appear to be a play-back problem as I have tried copying the video files to hard disk, and changing the display size without any improvement.

Another annoying problem is in the 'story-line' of the tutorials - there are numerous instances where references are made to what has gone before, or what will follow - and it just is not true. This starts in the very first tutorial when Chris shows us the new Quick Selection tool, and tells us that "We'll be getting to that." We never do.

Throughout the tutorials, Chris' style is casual and familiar, however, I don't think that the derogatory remark: "You girls will get it by ..." is very appropriate.

I get the impression that a production short-cut has been taken, and that these video tutorials are extracted from several larger tutorial environments; courses, perhaps. The association with lynda.com, an online training library, may be a strong clue to the source of the extracts.

All in all, I think that the video tutorials are great in concept, but this selection tends to be amateurish in execution. Yes, they cover a lot of useful material, but with a more professional approach, they could be much more effective.

On the other hand, the reference guide, written by Ted LoCascio, is well prepared, and contains a practical exercise for each video tutorial. The exercise uses the same image used in the video, and provides simple and clear instructions to enable us to perform the activity demonstrated. Each step of each exercise is prefixed by a video time-code, so that you can return to the video to re-view any step that you are unsure of.

While I have my reservations about the video tutorials, I think that this publication is useful in enabling the beginner/intermediate users to see and do, to learn, master and apply Photoshop CS3 tools and techniques.

The DVD contains 50 video tutorials with a play time between 1:20 and 6:39, and a folder of images to be used in the practical exercises.

The book contains 50 practical exercises in 160 pages

A review copy of this publication has been provided generously by Peachpit Press.

Another book including a DVD of video training, exercises and quizzes to enhance your learning experience is:

Understanding Adobe Photoshop, by Richard Harrington
although it is not explicitly for Photoshop CS3.